DH on Saturday

DECCAN HERALD
The Power of Good

WHACKY VERSE

Bengal sengol

The state of W Bengal
Is a full-action jungle.
Modi and Didi
Are both needy–
Of a win in this dangal.

Marijne returns to helm Indian women's hockey team

HI appoints Dutchman as head coach of embattled side

P20

K'taka govt may not adopt Centre's rural job scheme

Cabinet condemns replacing MGNREGA with G RAM G Act; CM to clear stand today

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka Cabinet on Friday "condemned" the Union government's decision to repeal the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and replace it with the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB - G RAM G) Act, and is even considering to not implement the law in the state.

Addressing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said: "The Cabinet condemns the Union government's decision to repeal the MGNREGA. Through this, the decentralisation and development emphasised at the panchayat levels through the 73rd and 74th amendments are being uprooted."

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has decided to launch protests against the Act from January 5.

Patil took strong exception to changing the nature of the scheme from demand-driven to supply-driven.

"This is so centralised that the panchayats where work will take place will be decided by the Union government," he noted.

The minister also slammed the move to change the 90:10 Centre — state fund-sharing arrangement to 60:40.

Patil explained that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would conduct a press conference on Saturday and provide further details on the government's stand.

Sources explained that panchayats used to get an yearly average of Rs 2 crore through the MGNREGA and their sustenance would now become difficult.

The Cabinet condemns the Union government's decision to repeal the MGNREGA. Through this, the decentralisation and development emphasised at the panchayat levels through the 73rd and 74th amendments are being uprooted

HK PATIL
Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister

Cabinet nod for 153-acre green space

The Cabinet on Friday approved a plan to develop a 153-acre biodiversity park named after 12th century social reformer Basavanna at Madappanahalli near Yelahanka. Addressing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre explained that the proposed biodiversity park would be the third biggest in Bengaluru after Lal Bagh and Cubbon Park. Page 5

The state Cabinet may even consider not implementing the VB – G RAM (G) Act, and instead might go for a separate legislation.

In 2025-26, Karnataka has a target of nine crore persondays under the MGNREGA. By December 5, the state had created 6.42 crore persondays.

▸ Cabinet, Page 6

Poll survey report vanishes from govt website

Cong leaders question EC-commissioned survey's findings, timing of its release

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Congress government in Karnataka recalled on Friday the 2024 Lok Sabha election survey report following backlash from its own leaders who questioned the findings and the timing of the report's release.

The report, based on a survey held between May and August 2025 and was made public a few days ago, has disappeared from the Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority's (KMEA) website.

The KMEA comes under the state government's department of planning, programme monitoring & statistics.

According to the survey, 84.55% citizens in the state believed that elections in India were free and fair. The survey also found that 83.61% citizens believed EVMs provided "accurate" results.

The survey, which covered 5,100 respondents, was commissioned by Chief Electoral Officer V Anbukumar and carried out by Mysuru-based NGO GRAAM.

Sources said the KMEA has decided to subject the report to "further discussion and review". While the KMEA removed the report, it was released to the media by Anbukumar's office on Friday.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the survey's findings were not "a certificate of electoral integrity". Senior Congress leader BK Hariprasad charged that the survey was done "only to sing paeans" about the Election Commission.

▸ Survey, Page 6

Findings don't disprove 'Vote Chori': CM

Findings of the EC-commissioned poll survey do not disprove "serious concerns about electoral malpractices" that Rahul Gandhi has raised, CM Siddaramaiah said on Friday. Details on Page 5

No allegiances: NGO

The GRAAM said Friday that it held no political or ideological allegiances, and that it was selected by the KMEA "through competitive bidding". Its founder R Balasubramaniam quit as chairperson of the board of trustees in 2022, it said. Details on Page 5

We left our rebel lives behind

Former Naxals in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli reflect on life after quitting the movement

Up until the 2010s, the Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra was a major hub of Naxalite activity. Since then the number of Naxals in the region has shrunk thanks to continued government efforts to curb the violence. Among those measures was the surrender and rehabilitation programme, through which over 700 Maoists in the district left the movement.

In this week's Saturday Story, a *DH* journalist visits Gadchiroli town where a housing colony set up by the Maharashtra government offers shelter to the reformed rebels. Most of them work in a steel plant about 60 km away. They talk about what drew them to the movement and what made them leave. They grappled with loneliness, depression and the constant threat of police encounters. Today, they lead a peaceful life, and mingle with other residents freely.

The SATURDAY STORY

Full story, Page 17

Wildlife board orders study to assess impact of safaris

BENGALURU, DHNS: The State Board of Wildlife (SBWL) on Friday said an expert committee will study the impact of safaris on wildlife in Nagarahole and Bandipur tiger reserves, where safaris have been suspended since November.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who chaired the meeting, was briefed about the problem by Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B Khandre. The department decided to suspend the safari after three people were killed and one person suffered serious injuries in tiger attacks in areas surrounding the two tiger reserves.

Khandre said farmers and villagers have attributed the deadly tiger attacks to the disturbance caused by the sound and light pollution of the safari vehicles and tourism activities in the tiger reserve.

▸ Safari, Page 6

Ballari SP suspended over violent clashes

BALLARI, DHNS

The government on Friday suspended Ballari superintendent of police Pavan Nejjur following clashes between Congress and BJP workers that resulted in the death of a ruling party worker. Nejjur had taken charge as Ballari SP around 5 pm on Thursday.

On Friday, the government, following a report from the Director General and Inspector General of Police, suspended Nejjur pending an inquiry. He was suspended on the grounds that he did not act effectively in handling the situation and failed to properly brief senior officers about the ground situation.

Relatives mourn the death of Rajashekar, in Ballari, on Friday.

The situation in Ballari turned violent late Thursday evening after a follower of Ballari City Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy tried to put up a banner in front of BJP MLA G Janardhana Reddy's house in Havambhavi regarding the Valmiki idol installation event scheduled to be held at SP Circle in the town on January 3. This was opposed by BJP workers, leading to stone-throwing.

The Brucepet police registered four FIRs, including one suo motu case, following the death of Congress worker Rajashekar due to a gun shot.

Superintendent of police (in charge) Ranjit Kumar Bandaru said that according to preliminary information, the bullet that hit the victim was not fired from a police weapon.

▸ Ballari, Page 6
More reports, Page 3B

Prison radicalisation: NIA chargesheets three more persons

BENGALURU, DHNS: The NIA on Friday said it has chargesheeted three more persons in connection with the 2023 Bengaluru prison radicalisation case linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

The agency has named Anees Fathima, Chan Pasha A and Dr Nagaraj S, and charged them under the IPC, UAPA, Explosive Substances Act, Karnataka Prisons Act, among others.

Details on Page 6

Trump threatens Iran over crackdown

AGENCIES: US President Donald Trump threatened on Friday to come to the aid of protesters in Iran if security forces fire on them, days into unrest that has left several dead and posed the biggest internal threat to Iranian authorities in years.

Reacting to Trump, Iran said it would not allow any foreign interference.

Details on Page 12

Water contamination deaths: Indore municipal chief shifted, 2 suspended

INDORE, PTI: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Friday evening announced that he had ordered the removal of the Indore municipal commissioner following the deaths due to water contamination, and also the suspension of two senior officials.

In a post on X following a review meeting on the issue, CM Yadav said his government will not tolerate any laxity with regard to the tragedy, and strict action was being taken.

He had ordered the "removal" of municipal commissioner Dilip Kumar Yadav, and the suspension of additional municipal commissioner Rohit Sissoniya and in-charge superintendent engineer of Public Health Engineering department Sanjeev Shrivastava, the CM said.

Earlier in the day, the government informed the Madhya Pradesh High Court that the Bhagirathpura health crisis has been categorised as a "public health contingency", and the situation has successfully stabilised following the implementation of emergency measures and continuous monitoring.

Local residents have claimed that 15 people, including a six-month-old baby, died due to the outbreak linked to contaminated drinking water in the Bhagirathpura area of Indore. However, the health department has not confirmed this claim and said only four deaths occurred.

Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava said he has received information about 10 deaths. More than 1,400 people have been affected by vomiting and diarrhoea.

A man shows a sample of the drinking water in Indore on Friday. PTI

Related reports, Page 7

OFF TRACK

Suburban rail work crawls but cost zooms by Rs 1k cr

BENGALURU, DHNS

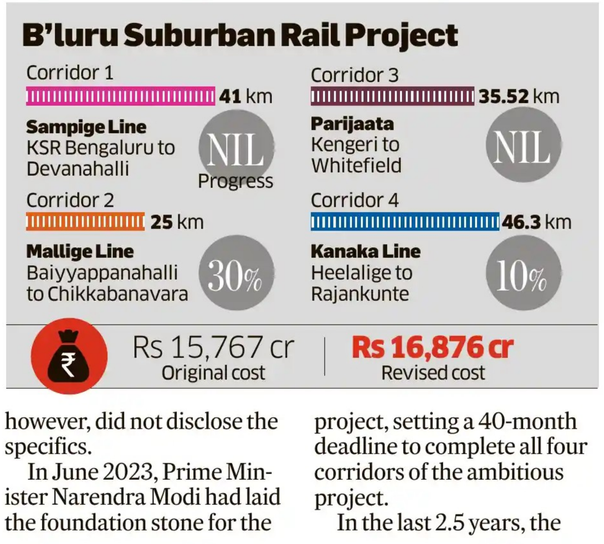
Even before making any significant progress on the construction of the much-delayed Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP), the cost of the 149-km rail network has gone up by a whopping Rs 1,019 crore. The state Cabinet, which met on Friday evening, accorded administrative approval for the revised project cost which now stands at Rs 16,876 crore, up from Rs 15,767 crore.

Briefing reporters, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil announced the Cabinet decision approving the revised cost. He, however, did not disclose the specifics.

In June 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation stone for the project, setting a 40-month deadline to complete all four corridors of the ambitious project.

In the last 2.5 years, the Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development Enterprise (K-RIDE) neither met the deadlines nor achieved any substantial milestone.

So far, two of the four corridors have seen no progress on the ground. The remaining two corridors have achieved about 30% (Mallige line) and 10% (Kanaka line) physical progress, but the K-RIDE is yet to engage new firms to complete the balance works ever since construction firm L&T exited the contract in July last year, demanding Rs 505 crore in claims.



▸ Suburban, Page 6
Will complete 10 flyovers, bridges this yr: GBA, Page 2

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LONG-PENDING WORKS

■ Start date ■ Expected completion date

1 Integrated flyover at Yelahanka police station circle, Shesharipuram College and BWSSB Junction
Dec 2021 – June 2026

2 Grade separators to Kengeri Outer Ring Road across Ullal main road
Nov 2020 – Feb 2026

3 Grade separator at HMT Road and Pipeline Road Junction
Nov 2020 – Feb 2026

4 Grade separator at Outer Ring Road at Kerekodi Road Hosakerehalli Junction
Aug 2020 – Jan 2026

5 Grade separators to Kengeri Outer Ring Road across Annapoorneshwari Nagara Main Road
July 2022 – Mar 2026

6 Pipeline Road from West of Chord Road to Outer Ring Road via Kurubarahalli
July 2022 – Feb 2026

7 Elevated corridor by integrating Ejipura main Inner Ring Road Junction, Sony World Junction and Kendriya Sadan Junction
Nov 2023 – June 2026

8 Bridges and other improvement works on Ring Road from NH Tumakuru Road Junction to Nayandanahalli Junction and ORR from Sumanahalli Junction to Ambedkar College
July 2022 – Feb 2026

9 Bridge over existing storm water drain from Halagevaderahalli near Gopalan Arcade to Mysuru Road near Bengaluru University junction
July 2022
Work stopped. No deadline fixed

10 Grade separator at Jalahalli Circle along Subratho Mukherjee Road and Peenya Industrial Ring Road
June 2019
Work yet to begin

11 Railway overbridge at Jakkur between Channasandra and Yelahanka stations
March 2024 – Feb 2026

12 Approach ramps to railway underpass bridge connecting Yelahanka Old Town and New Town near Yelahanka Railway Station
Feb 2023 – March 2026

GBA aims to wrap up 10 flyovers, underpasses

Public remains sceptical about 2026 completion plan

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has claimed that work on 10 of the 12 ongoing flyovers, bridges and underpasses in the city will be completed in 2026.

In a written reply to a question raised during the recently concluded Assembly session, the GBA outlined timelines for these projects, stating that 10 are expected to be completed next year. Several of these projects were initiated as early as 2020 and have missed multiple deadlines.

For instance, in November 2020, the then civic body, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), began work on two grade separators on the RR Nagar–Kengeri Outer Ring Road, across Ullal Main Road and at the HMT Road pipeline junction. More than four years later, both projects remain incomplete.

In addition, the civic body has failed to kickstart work on two projects announced in 2019 and 2022.

At Jalahalli Circle, work has not progressed due to delays in land acquisition. Similarly, construction of a grade separator on the Kengeri Outer Ring Road across Annapoorneshwari Nagar has been stalled since 2022, as the project cost increased by Rs 1.5 crore and approval for the revised estimate was granted only recently.

Data provided by the GBA also shows that failure to complete land acquisition has been a major factor behind delays, with such issues affecting at least four of the 12 ongoing projects.

While the GBA maintains that the projects will be completed in 2026, scepticism remains among engineers and the public.

"Completion is possible only under ideal conditions, where approvals are granted on time and work proceeds as scheduled. However, land acquisition is often delayed, and cost escalations require fresh approvals, none of which happen in time. There are several overheads," a senior GBA official said.

Daily commuters said they have lost faith in repeated assurances.

"Take the Ejipura flyover, for instance. There have been repeated public demands to complete it, but officials keep announcing new deadlines every time one passes. None of them are met," said Rakesh M, a techie who regularly commutes via Ejipura.

GRT Jewellers launches Swarna Sankranthi offers

For over six decades, GRT Jewellers has been a part of celebrations, milestones and memories. Established in 1964, the brand has grown on a foundation of trust, tradition and craftsmanship, evolving into a respected jewellery name with 66 showrooms - 65 across south India and one in Singapore - offering thoughtfully-designed collections in gold, diamond, platinum, silver and gemstones.

Rooted in tradition, modernity and festive spirit, GRT Jewellers ushers in the New Year with a renewed edition of its signature festive campaign. Inspired by the harvest festival celebrated across the region, the campaign takes on different expressions - 'Swarna Sankranthi' in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana; 'Pongal' in Tamil Nadu; and 'Golden Festival' in Singapore.

The campaign has attractive offers for customers – 20 per cent off on wastage (VA) on gold jewellery, up to 25 per cent off on diamond and uncut diamond value (excluding solitaires), 25 per cent off on VA on silver articles, and 10 per cent off on MRP on silver jewellery. There's a flat 30 per cent off on making charges and VA of platinum jewellery too.

Swarna Sankranthi

Curated by DH Brandspot

In bid to complete PRR, govt to offer higher compensation

Decision expected to provide significant relief to landowners

BENGALURU, DHNS

The long-pending issue of land acquisition, which has delayed the Peripheral Ring Road (PRR) project, saw movement on Friday with the state cabinet empowering the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) to offer revised compensation for 948 acres of land, based on its October 2025 order.

The decision is expected to provide significant relief to landowners, as it covers more than 50% of the land required for the 74-km project.

The PRR project, now rebranded as the Bengaluru Business Corridor, has faced prolonged delays despite multiple compensation models being proposed for landowners affected by the 10-lane road.

The BDA had passed awards for about 948 acres and 14.5 guntas of land as early as 2007. However, it was unable to take possession of the land as monetary compensation was not paid to landowners, leaving the acquisition process incomplete.

"Since the awards fixed earlier were extremely low, we were left with two options," a senior official associated with the project said.

"Either we force the old rates on farmers or seek government approval to extend the revised compensation as an ex gratia payment. The latter was chosen, as it would encourage farmers to part with their land for this long-delayed project," the official said.

In total, the 74-km corridor requires around 1,810 acres of land. Of this, approximately 200 acres belong to the government, while the remaining land is privately owned. In addition, the BDA has already issued preliminary notifications for about 608 acres and officials said a final notification for these parcels would be issued shortly.

Peenya Industrial Area to get high-quality treated water

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) will supply treated water to the Peenya Industrial Area through pipelines, promoting water reuse.

The board has called for tenders to supply 'ultra-pure treated water' to the Peenya Industrial Area.

BWSSB Chairman Dr Ram Prasath Manohar said the project aims to provide uninterrupted high-grade treated water to the industrial area.

"The primary objective is to supply water at an affordable cost to support growth and operations of small-scale industries in the region," he said.

Treated water will be supplied from the four-MLD STP at Nagasandra and processed with advanced technology. The project aims to conserve potable water currently used by lakhs of workers for non-production needs such as flushing and cleaning.

By substituting fresh water with ultra-pure treated water, the board intends to save millions of litres of Cauvery water, which can then be redirected to Bengaluru households, the BWSSB said in a statement.

The project includes a 27-km dedicated HDPE pipeline to industrial units, a sump-pump house, pumping machinery, a DI Rising Main, and a five-lakh litre overhead tank.

Unauthorised road cutting: GBA chief cautions violators of penal action

BENGALURU, DHNS: Following complaints of rampant road cutting, Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao on Friday warned BWSSB, Bescom, KPTCL and GAIL officials that criminal action would be taken if they cut roads without prior permission.

At a coordination meeting, Rao said obtaining permission through the MARKS software is mandatory for any road cutting in the city.

"Any department found cutting roads in the GBA jurisdiction without prior permission will be penalised and criminal cases registered," Rao said.

After permission is granted, departments must complete the work quickly and restore the road properly, he said.

Departments were also told to submit advance schedules of proposed road-cutting works and mark proposed sites, with lengths, on Google Maps.

Jetting machines

To maintain clean footpaths, Rao directed the Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML) to procure five water jetting machines, one for each city corporation.

"These machines should be used regularly to clean footpaths in each city corporation," he said.

Lalbagh's fallen giants reborn as living art

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Fallen old trees at the Lalbagh Botanical Garden are finding new life as the second National Wood Carving Workshop began in the botanical garden on Friday.

The 15-day workshop hosts 48 experts from across districts to carve wood and teach carving to students of visual arts and other disciplines.

Wood for the workshop comes from Lalbagh's fallen trees, some about 150 years old, brought down by root cavity, wind or rain.

Speaking to *DH*, Shivaprasad, member, Karnataka Shilpakala Academy, said, "We have mahogany and nilgiri wood. This year, we plan to carve flora and fauna. Artists will be given time and inspiration. The 150-200-year-old trees can now be preserved for another 150-200 years."

The final works will be preserved in the Open-Air Wood Museum in Lalbagh.

"Products from 2018 are currently in the museum, preserved with help from Wood Institute scientists. We intend to display this year's work in another location and make it more interactive for the public," said Dr M Jagadeesh, Joint Director of Horticulture.

Participants at the second edition of the wood carving workshop at Lalbagh Botanical Garden on Friday.
DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

The wood is laminated every two years and maintained with pesticides and other chemicals as advised by scientists, depending on weather exposure.

AN Yellappa Reddy, environment expert, said, "It is important that art is given prominence here. More people should get involved and bring their children to understand the importance of art and nature. This is one of those arts that does not harm nature."

Wood statues of a fish and dog from the previous workshop were presented at the inauguration.

YouTuber held for kidnapping, misconduct with minor girl

BENGALURU, DHNS: A YouTuber was arrested by the Magadi police in Bengaluru South district for allegedly kidnapping a minor girl and inappropriately touching her, police said.

The accused has been identified as Ravi Jamuna, a native of Tumakuru, who runs the RJ Digital News YouTube channel.

According to police, the incident occurred around 2 am on January 1, when Jamuna allegedly approached the minor as she was returning home after celebrating New Year's at a relative's house within the Magadi police station limits. He was in a car with two friends, and the trio had been partying earlier.

Police said the 17-year-old girl was forcibly pulled into the car, which then drove away. Jamuna allegedly touched her inappropriately inside the vehicle. The girl managed to alert her family using a phone belonging to one of Jamuna's friends, who had got down from the car shortly after she was picked up.

The family later rescued the girl and apprehended Jamuna. Police are probing the role of his two friends and have registered a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Vasanthnagar residents stage silent protest against tree felling

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Vasanthnagar Residents' Welfare Association (VRWA) staged a silent placard march to protest the felling of trees by builders.

A multi-storey apartment complex is set to come up on 8th Main Road, Vasanthnagar.

Association members said the building will be a government office quarter. More than 80 people, including schoolchildren, college students and residents, participated in the protest.

Speaking to *DH*, Dr Anil Abraham, President of VRWA, said, "On December 31, three trees were cut at night. Once we found out, we immediately stopped them from continuing."

The builders are reportedly cutting pavement trees that do not obstruct construction. More than eight trees have been marked for felling, said Abraham.

The association has approached officials of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) to intervene.

"Currently, they have stopped the destruction of trees, but we are worried that in our absence the trees might be destroyed," he said.

Nandakumar, a VWRA member, said, "This tree-cutting is illegal as they have not taken permission from forest officials. When we contacted the officials, they said they were unaware of the situation. They said strict action would be initiated against the GBA engineers and field engineers concerned."

Invites to be published in this column should be sent to:
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Please note that hard copies will not be accepted

Dhaatu International Puppet Fest

BENGALURU, DHNS: Dhaatu, Bengaluru, in collaboration with the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Bengaluru, is hosting a two-day curtain-raiser for the Dhaatu International Puppet Festival 2026, themed 'Karnataka Greets the World'.

As part of the programme, a puppet show titled 'Bala Kanda' will be staged on Saturday at 5.30 pm at the NGMA auditorium. This will be followed by 'Karnataka's Puppetry Splendour', a wooden puppet installation, which will be open to visitors from 10 am to 5 pm on January 3 and 4 at NGMA.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

'Dalit Literature and Movement–50': Three-day state-level study camp; Organised by Karnataka Sahitya Akademi; Venkatagiri Gowda Auditorium; 9.30 am onwards.

Golden Jubilee Celebrations: Sakalavara Community Mental Health Centre; Shalini Rajneesh, Bhikkhu Ananda Thera, Dr Pratima Murthy to attend; NIMHANS South Campus; 10 am.

Purandaradasa and Tyagaraja Aradhana & 52nd Annual Celebration: Yadalam Madhusudan Shreshti, M Krishnappa to attend; Organised by Purandara Tyagaraja Temple Music Service Committee; Bhavani Shankara Temple, Vasanthapura; 5 pm.

112th Foundation Day & Talent Felicitation Ceremony: Maheshwar Rao, Lakshmi, Vinaya Prasad, Ravindra Karilingannavar to attend; Organised by Greater Bengaluru Authority Municipal Employees' Cooperative Society; Puttanna Chetty Town Hall; 3.30 pm onwards.

CULTURAL

'Krishnarpanam' Dance Festival: Inauguration: Geetha Ramanujam, MG Manjunath, Malini N to attend; Ravindra Kalakshetra; 4 pm.

'Bhava Surabhi' Musical Evening: Raghavendra Beejadi and Team; Ramesh TS (keyboard); Srinivas Kakhndaki (tabla); Ramesh (rhythm pad); Organised by Kadumalleshwara Friends' Association; Kadumalleshwara Open-air Theatre; from 6.30 pm onwards.

National Music and Dance Festival: Karnataka Classical Music: V Vibha Ravindra, V Pallavi; Bharatanatyam: Disha, Sukanya Raghav, Supriya Ashwin, Poorna Pawar; Organised by Sangeetha Sambhrama; Sevasadan, Malleswaram; 9.30 am.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Mist

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	27.5°C
Minimum	19.1°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm	NA%
Sunset (Jan 3)	6:05 pm
Sunrise (Jan 4)	6:42 am
Moonrise	5:30 pm
Moonset	5:30 am

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

HEAVY INFLOW

NHAI, BTP brace for post-holiday return rush

There will be extra personnel at three traffic hotspots: Hosur Rd (in pic), Bannerghatta Rd, and Kanakapura Rd.

BENGALURU, DHNS

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) have deployed extra personnel around toll booths and highways to manage the return of holiday crowds to Bengaluru on Sunday.

Traffic is expected to peak on Sunday evening and Monday morning, said Jayaprakash, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic, North).

"We expect a spillover from NICE Road to cause congestion in Gorguntepalya. Hebbal may also see traffic, but the new flyover should ease pressure in the area," he said.

In South Bengaluru, BTP will deploy extra personnel at three congestion points: Hosur Road, Bannerghatta Road, and Kanakapura Road.

"Most people will return by bus, causing congestion the late evening and morning. Car travel is usually staggered, so it is not a major concern," said Gopal M Byakod, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic, South).

To ensure smooth traffic, NHAI has deployed 10-15 marshals at city toll gates for 10 days, from December 28.

"During heavy pile-ups, toll collectors have been told to remove barricades for faster movement. With FASTag now used by 98-99% in Karnataka and UPI available for emergencies, toll movement is streamlined," said Jayakumar KB, Project Director (Bengaluru), NHAI.

Toll plazas at Sadahalli, Kolar and Nelamangala are likely to see some traffic, he added.

The end of the festive season caused similar choke points on the Mysuru Highway and NICE Road between December 25 and January 1, with vehicles halted for long periods.

To beat the congestion, some plan to travel at odd hours.

"We first planned to leave late Sunday night and reach Bengaluru by Monday morning. But after seeing traffic images, we decided to leave by Sunday noon and reach before 4 am," said Tanveer, who is returning to Bengaluru after a road trip across Kerala.

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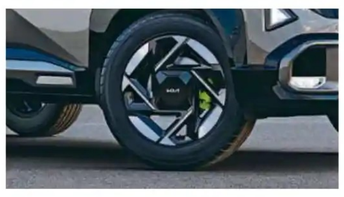
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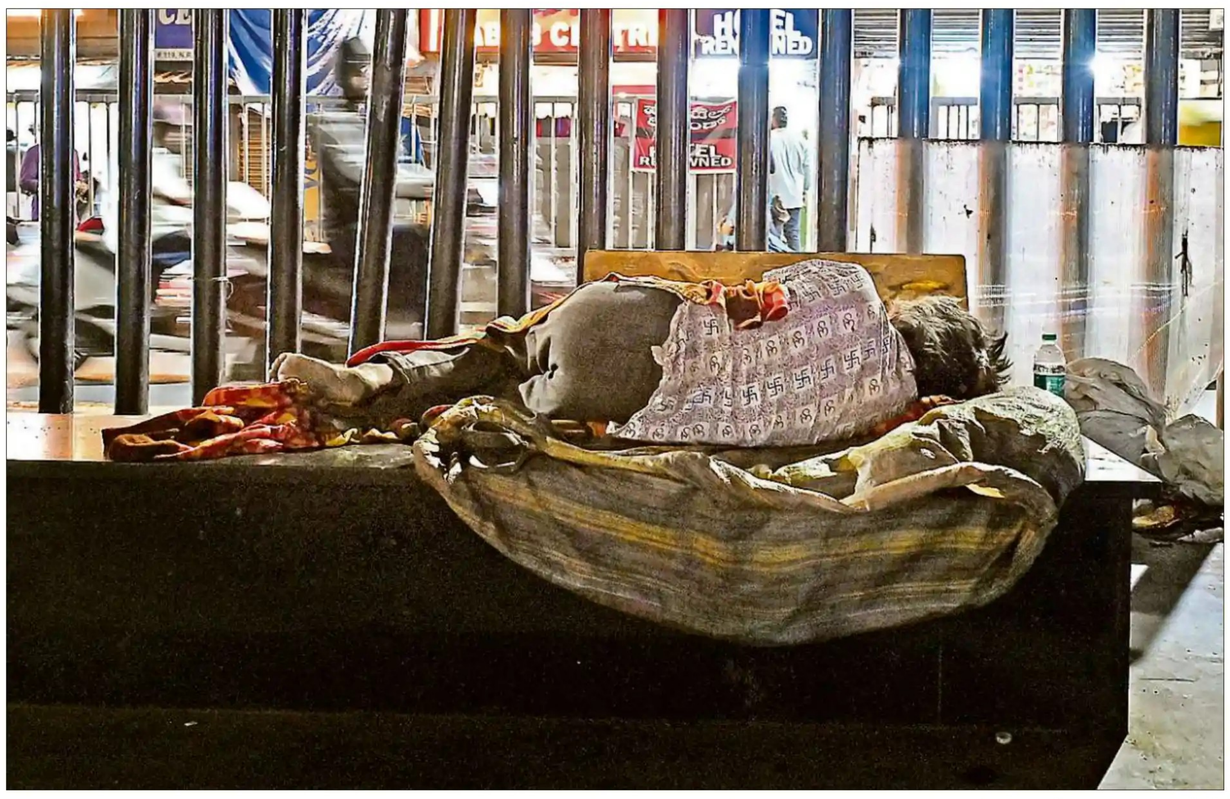
BENGALURU'S WINTER SHAME

Night shelters languish while the homeless suffer

Fundless night shelters leave the homeless to fend for themselves. Where does the problem lie?



Homeless people sleep on pavements and under flyovers near KR Market. DH PHOTOS/PUSHKAR V

SHREE D N & PUSHKAR V
BENGALURU, DHNS

Invisible on Bengaluru's many crowded pavements, the homeless sleep in the numbing winter chill, enduring hunger, fear, and neglect, devoid of shelter, dignity, and security. Gandhinagar, K R Market, Yashwanthpur, and other areas that are transit and commercial hubs see most of them.

Individuals and non-governmental organisations donate blankets and food to such people from time to time. Suroj Ali, a member of a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Humanity is Religion, says his NGO has donated more than 500 blankets in Bengaluru.

"These are dailywagers and migrant labourers who come to the city. There are also drunk people sleeping on the pavements. They do cover themselves as much as possible, but this biting cold can cause illness easily for anyone," he shares.

There are night shelters for the homeless in the city, but the system has failed to take care of the situation.

In December 2022, *DH* visited night shelters for the homeless in the city to bring out the problems in night shelters and the homelessness prevailing in the city. Three years later, today, nothing has changed. Night shelters have only gotten worse, while the homeless still sleep on pavements.

When asked why people still sleep on pavements when the night shelters are never full to their capacity, a source said: "People refuse to get inside the shelters. They say they get free food and blankets on pavements, they are free to beg, and stay unclean. In night shelters, we can provide only one-time food, and we do not want them to beg. We ask them to be clean. Some don't like it."

There is always another side to any story. Lingappa, 62, a homeless person, said, "I don't like shelterhomes, they are poorly maintained, and I cannot afford them either." Sources say shelter home caretakers solicit payments from those who can afford them, even though it is technically free.

Lingappa keeps changing places from time to time, and it has only gotten hard to find a place to sleep. "I have been living on the streets of Bengaluru for several years, ever since I was shunted from the house for running into debt."

Most homeless people demand cleaner and safer shelter homes. "If I have to choose to sleep on the road rather than having a roof over my head, that's because of the poor condition and maintenance," said Kumara (name changed). He was stabbed in one of the shelter homes during a brawl that broke out while he was asleep, and has vowed never to return to any shelter homes.

The fast-changing landscape and development work have added to the burden for the homeless. "I used to sleep near Cantonment railway station, but due to ongoing construction work, I have moved to a location near the city railway station," said Nersappa, 54. Here, too, he says that security personnel evict homeless people frequently.

Fund trapped in bureaucratic hurdles

The Greater Bengaluru Authority area has been sanctioned 74 night shelters, but only 48 are established and operational. They, too, have been experiencing infrastructure issues.

An appeal by the Impact India Consortium, a collective of shelter management agencies (SMAs - the nongovernmental organisations that run night shelters for homeless in Bengaluru), explains this in graphic detail: old, unusable beds; bed bug infestations; a foul stench; CCTV cameras and smart attendance machines that often require repair; and a lack of budget to fix toilets, bathrooms, and water pumps.

It states that a shelter home requires at least Rs 15,85,967 per year to operate effectively, yet sources indicate that most SMAs have been operating shelter homes without any funding for two years.

Each night shelter is majorly funded by the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) for the first five years, after which the local corporation takes over. But in Bengaluru, it has not happened.

In Bengaluru, six shelters that have completed five years will be taken up by corporations, while the remaining shelters will continue to be funded by NULM. Documents accessed by *DH* show that, as of November 2025, within the GBA limits, NULM owed Rs 8.55 crore in Operation and Maintenance costs.

S S Rajani S S, a consultant who works on homelessness, says that NULM is implementing a pilot project and a revision of standard operating procedure. The NULM had asked ULBs to release funds from their budgets, with reimbursement promised, in an official letter. But BBMP/GBA has not released any funds.

Hence, funds are not released to ULBs for this programme. However, the erstwhile BBMP had reserved a budget of four crores for 2024-25, from which funds could have been released but were not.

"The state-level Independent Impartial Committee has directed all ULBs to release funds. In a meeting two months ago, GBA officials promised to release money to the corporations, but no one knows if that has been released or not," she adds.

"The shelters are in poor condition. Each shelter has four staff. Forty-seven shelters, each with four staff, are struggling. The elderly and sick residents of shelters are not getting food due to a lack of budget," she adds.

"Deaths of the homeless would be high during the cold seasons. However, the number of shelters has not increased, nor has the quality been maintained. The homeless also hesitate to come because of the poor conditions," she explains.

"We have recommended solar panels for water heating. But BBMP did not care. There are sick and senior citizens who could have benefited from this facility," she explains.

Another problem is the lack of transparency. "RTI rules are not followed. Neither the NULM nor the BBMP websites address funding status, night shelter locations, inmate data, facility information, shelter status, or related matters. This is a violation of RTI," Rajani adds.

'Problems will be sorted soon'

Suralkar Vikas Kishor, IAS, Special Commissioner (Education & Welfare), GBA, explains that if NULM funding is delayed, corporations are expected to cover the costs, which will later be reimbursed from the NULM budget.

"These NGOs are equally responsible for the delay. When their work order lapsed, they were supposed to report to the corporations and ensure that the tenders got a proper extension from the competent authorities. In the absence of this documentation, the funding has been delayed. It will be disbursed soon," he assured.

He says this problem is not universal, and not all NGOs running night shelters face it. "There have been documentation issues only in a few cases; those have to be settled," he adds. In GBA limits, only the West zone has released grants to shelter management agencies (SMAs).

He explains why NGOs face funding issues. "The NGOs that participate in the tendering process end up quoting very low rates. When we ask why, they claim they also raise funds through CSR initiatives. They do not run the shelters based on our funds," he adds.

However, a representative from one of the NGOs told *DH* that not all NGOs are eligible for CSR funding and that the government cannot assume that every NGO receives it.

"Because of this, we have been running without a salary for two years. Supporting staff cannot resign, as doing so would prevent them from receiving the pending amount," he explained. Because the funds have been stalled, managers are unable to run the shelters effectively, he adds.

Feedback:
pointblank@ deccanherald.co.in

Rendered homeless by the government

BENGALURU, DHNS

In late December 2025, authorities carried out a demolition operation in Kogilu Layout near Yelahanka targeting allegedly illegal structures—mainly makeshift homes and sheds built on government land. Officials stated that notices had been issued to occupants to vacate the land, but residents did not comply.

About 169 families were left homeless in the drive. Nandini, a social worker with 'Dudiyuva Janara Vedike' (Federation of Working People), which works on family rehabilitation, says the government has promised to provide them with alternative housing in an area four kilometres away.

She says many of them had temporary title deeds issued by the government. They were mainly from the Sufi Darvesh community, who migrated from Andhra Pradesh more than 30 years ago; hence, the area was called Fakeer Colony.

"They have been wrongly termed as Bangladeshis, but none of them is a Bangladeshi. There are a few from Uttar Pradesh and other northern states as well; they have the right to relocate anywhere in India," she adds, regretting the way vested interests are using the issue for their benefit.

Meanwhile, due to a lack of housing, some evicted residents stay with relatives, while others choose to remain near their former homes, fearing they may not secure alternative accommodation if they leave. "There are close to 400 children here, some of them go to school, some don't. They all attend the nearby Urdu school. It is a tough, traumatic time for them," she explains.

"They have been waiting for the Ashraya housing promised by the government; it was supposed to be allotted soon, but no one knows how long it will take," she adds.

Homes and hutments demolished in Kogilu Layout near Yelahanka. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

METRO

3 held for auto driver's murder

BENGALURU, DHNS: KP Agrahara police on Friday arrested three men in connection with the alleged murder of a 36-year-old autorickshaw driver.

The arrested have been identified as Sagar Das, 24, Saurabh Biswal, 25, and Subhrakanth Bhuviya, 35. All three are natives of Odisha and were staying in Bhuvaneshwari Nagar in Bengaluru.

According to police, the trio stabbed Rechanna, a native of Kollegal, outside his house in KP Agrahara on Wednesday night, leading to his death. Family members who found the body initially suspected that he had fallen asleep after consuming alcohol, but later noticed the stab wounds.

A senior police officer said the stabbing appeared to have stemmed from "instant rage" and that there was no specific motive for the murder. Further investigation is underway.

Kamaraj Road reopens after 7 years; to ease CBD traffic & cut commute time

Closed for work on MG Rd underground metro station

BENGALURU, DHNS

Motorists heave a sigh of relief as Kamaraj Road, a key arterial stretch in the city's central business district, reopens fully to traffic. DH PHOTO/PRASHANTH HG

Kamaraj Road, a key arterial stretch in the Central Business District (CBD), has fully reopened to traffic after long-pending metro works.

The road, closed between Cubbon Road and MG Road on June 15, 2019, for the MG Road underground metro station, is now accessible on both sides.

The 220-metre stretch connecting Cubbon Road to the Cauvery Emporium Junction was a bottleneck for nearly six-and-a-half years due to Namma Metro Pink Line's underground station.

The west carriageway reopened on June 14, 2024. With the east carriageway reopening on Friday, the stretch is now fully restored.

The reconstructed road spans 214 metres with a minimum width of 11 metres on each carriageway, allowing smoother flow.

The reopening is expected to ease congestion and improve connectivity between Commercial Street and Brigade Road. The reopening has decongested Anil Kumble Circle and BRV Junction.

Motorists from Commercial Street to Brigade Road no longer need detours via Dickenson or Queen's Road. With barricades gone, vehicles have a direct route, reducing peak travel time by 10 to 15 minutes.

Sunil Kumar, a commuter from Ulsoor, said, "The detour through Infantry Road was tiresome. This saves me so much fuel and time."

Ramesh, an autorickshaw driver, added, "Earlier, taking a passenger from Shivajinagar to Brigade Road meant a 2-km detour. Now, it is a straight shot. It is a huge relief for us."

'True test from Monday'

While traffic was smooth on Friday, the ACP (Central, Traffic) noted the true test will come from Monday.

"As it is the New Year holiday and a weekend, traffic is currently normal. We will see the actual impact on Monday when officegoers return after their break," the ACP added.

Banashankari's 'Safety Island' tops police SOS alerts

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

The 'Safety Island' at the Banashankari bus stop 6th Stage is the city's most active emergency touchpoint, topping the chart for "buzzes" received by the Bengaluru Police Command Centre.

Its proximity to isolated park stretches has made the kiosk vital for reporting thefts and distress calls.

Under the Bengaluru Safe City Project, 50 blue, telephone booth-like kiosks have been installed citywide.

A senior police officer noted that most are in busy areas, which deters crimes like molestation, but they also serve as lifelines for other emergencies.

Since June 2024, the command centre has handled 188 actionable SOS calls via these kiosks, including 62 cases of theft, bag snatching, local quarrels, and complaints about autorickshaw and cab refusals.

"I had lost my mobile phone on a BMTC bus and felt stranded," said a student who used the Banashankari island. "I pressed the SOS button, and the police responded immediately. They traced the bus conductor and recovered my phone. It is a huge relief for those who do not have a phone handy during an emergency."

A blue SOS kiosk installed under the Bengaluru Safe City Project. The command centre has handled 188 actionable SOS calls through 50 such kiosks across the city since June 2024. DH FILE

'Safe Connect' feature

The 'Safe Connect' feature in the Karnataka State Police (KSP) app enables two-way audio and video communication, letting the command centre deploy Hoysala patrol vehicles through real-time GPS tracking.

The app has proven effective for commuters.

A woman cab passenger recalled a late-night ride: "The driver was taking routes I did not recognise. I initiated a 'Safe Connect' video call. This allowed police to track my location and dispatch help immediately."

"The command centre remains on high alert, especially on Sundays and holidays when call volumes spike. With 9 lakh active KSP app users, the department has streamlined response protocols.

"Whether a person uses a physical island or digital connect, help is never more than a button-press away," the officer added.

Bullet recovered from victim's body fired from pvt weapon: Police sources

Police seize five weapons of private & govt gunmen of Cong MLA, his aide

BALLARI, DHNS

The bullet that killed Congress worker Rajashekar Reddy was fired from the weapon of Congress MLA Bharath Reddy's gunman, according to the police sources.

A 12mm bullet fired from a single bore weapon was found inside slain Rajashekar Reddy's body.

The bullet fired from the weapon matches with the weapon used by the gunmen of Bharath Reddy and his associate Satish Reddy, a senior police officer told *DH* on the condition of anonymity.

Moments after the riots on Thursday night, the forensic science experts had collected fired bullets and other related materials. The bullet lodged in the body and those collected the previous evening matched during the examination of the body to determine the cause of death.

Deputy Commissioner Nagendra Prasad, DIG Vartika Katiyar, Additional SP Ravikumar and others inspect the spot of the firing incident that occurred in front of MLA Janardhana Reddy's residence at Avvambavi in Ballari.

Further, the fired bullets matched with the weapons seized from the gunmen of the Bellary City MLA and his associate, the police sources confirmed.

The mobile video clips of the MLA's gunmen opening fire in the air and towards the residence of BJP leader and Gangavathi MLA G Janardhana Reddy are doing rounds in the social media platforms.

The Brucepet police have seized five firearms of the private and government gunmen of the Congress MLA.

Interestingly, slain Rajashekar Reddy's brother Eshwar Reddy, in a complaint filed with Brucepet police, has alleged that his brother was shot dead by Janardhana Reddy and that he issued life threats saying "You will meet the same fate, if you dare touch me."

Bharath Reddy, speaking to reporters late Thursday night, blamed Janardhana Reddy for the Congress worker's murder.

Meanwhile, Congress MLAs Bharath Reddy and K N Ganesh paid their last respects to Rajashekar Reddy at the latter's residence. The mortal remains of the Congress worker were cremated at the Harishchandra Ghat on Rupanagudi Road.

BHARATH REDDY
Congress MLA

"I apologise if the Thursday night developments caused any inconvenience to the people of Ballari. It was unintended and accidental.

Valmiki statue unveiling postponed

The unveiling of Maharshi Valmiki statue in Ballari, scheduled for Saturday, has been postponed indefinitely following the instruction by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G Parameshwara.

B Nagendra

Former minister and Congress MLA B Nagendra told reporters, "The CM and the Home minister have asked me to convince Bharath Reddy to postpone the unveiling ceremony in view of the prevailing tension in the city. Hence, the event has been postponed."

Meanwhile, Bharath Reddy said that a thorough probe into Thursday night development will bring out the truth. "I apologise if the Thursday night developments caused any inconvenience to the people of Ballari. It was unintended and accidental."

BJP demands judicial probe

BALLARI, DHNS

BJP state president B Y Vijayendra on Friday demanded the state government for a thorough probe by a high court judge on the banner row which resulted in the death of a Congress party worker and take strict legal action against those involved in the violence.

Speaking to reporters after enquiring about the well-being of a party worker, injured in the Thursday night riots, at a hospital, he said, " The government should take the incident seriously and take stringent actions against those involved."

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka, told reporters in Bengaluru, "There is a total collapse of law and order in Ballari. MLA Nara Bharat Reddy's associates had gathered to create a situation to finish off Janardhana Reddy. This is a politically motivated matter, and Home Minister G Parameshwara instead of assuring the life and liberty of Janardhana Reddy was speaking with Nara Bharat Reddy (soon after the incident last night)."

Meanwhile, Janardhana Reddy alleged a conspiracy against him by Bharath Reddy and claimed there was a threat to his life. He demanded a probe by a sitting judge or CBI. He said as soon as he arrived at his Ballari residence from Gangavathi, someone shouted "Janardhana Reddy has come", and immediately firing started. "I'm giving a complaint personally regarding safety for my life, and the collapse of law and order."

Cong delegation to visit Ballari

BENGALURU, PTI: KPCC president D K Shivakumar on Friday constituted a six-member delegation to visit Ballari, where clashes erupted over the installation of banners ahead of a statue unveiling programme.

He has instructed the delegation to visit Ballari immediately and submit a report after analysing the situation there. "Information has been received that this incident has led to a tense atmosphere in Ballari," he said in a official communication.

Directorate of Tourism,Government of Jharkhand
MDI Building, 2nd floor, HEC Campus, Dhurwa, Ranchi-04Tele Fax : 0651-2331828
Email: dirjhakhandtourism@gmail.com/ jtdcltd@gmail.com

Ref.No.:- 02/2026 Date:-02/01/2026

VERY SHORT TENDER NOTICE

RFP for Selection of Suitable Player for Development, Operation, Maintenance and Management of 4 Star or Higher Category Hotel at Deoghar, Jharkhand on PPP Mode (3rd call)

The Jharkhand Tourism Development Corporation Limited (JTDCL), Government of Jharkhand (GoJ) undertaking intends to publish RFP for **Selection of Suitable Player for Development, Operation, Maintenance and Management of 4 Star or Higher Category Hotel at Deoghar, Jharkhand on PPP Mode (3rd Call).**
The detailed RFP document can be downloaded from the below mentioned website : https://jtdcl.jharkhand.gov.in, and submit their offline Applications.
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Sl.No.	Tender No.	Closing Date	Brief Description	Qty.	EMD (in ₹)
1	46253097A	27/01/26	Motor Protection Circuit Breaker (MPCB) for compressor etc.	3031 Nos.	1,17,170/-
2	65255048	23/01/26	Pit less Electronic In Motion Railway Weigh-bridges (EIMWB) (Prebid meeting on 09/01/26 at 11.00 hrs. at PCMM Meeting Room/S.E. Railway/Garden Reach/Kolkata-43).	07 Set	3,18,010/-
3	OE255681	27/01/26	25KV AC MEMU Transformer 1050 KVA with HV Turret and Accessories etc.	05 Nos.	3,30,400/-
4	11253436	22/01/26	CLEVES FOR MODIFIED TRANSITION SCREW.	384 Nos.	1,07,520/-
5	12253245	19/02/26	Deep Groove Ball Bearing	129 Nos.	1,75,053/-
6	46255077	05/02/26	Fabricated and Galvanized B Series Steel Structures B-200 and B-225 with batten plates etc.	438.24 MT	8,68,770/-
7	46255082	29/01/26	130 sq.mm Stranded Cadmium Copper wire (37/2.10) (Large Span Wire) etc.	10 MT	2,06,260/-

Interested tenderers may visit website **www.ireps.gov.in** for full details/ description/specification of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for these items will be accepted. **N.B. :** Prospective Bidders may regularly visit **www.ireps.gov.in** to participate in all other tenders & any corrigendum published thereafter. **(PR-1026)**

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KSCPCR to urge govt to extend menstrual leave for girl students

DAVANGERE, DHNS: Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights member Aparna M Kolla on Friday said she would recommend to the state government the extension of menstrual leave to girl students in schools and colleges, on the lines of the facility available to women employees.

She was responding to a question raised by a female student during an interaction organised by the Directorate of Child Protection at Guru Bhavan on AVK College Road here.

Appreciating the student for voicing the concern, Aparna said the suggestion was thoughtful and progressive. "This is indeed a good idea. However, such a decision has to be taken at the government level. The Commission will immediately recommend this to the state government," she added.

Expressing concern over the rise in child marriages in the district, Aparna said official data showed disturbing figures.

She urged officials to take stricter measures and appealed to students to report such incidents to the child helpline.

She also cautioned students about sexual predators who lure girls in the name of love and relationships, and advised them to focus on education and their future.

Techie among two held for derogatory posts on Darshan's wife

BENGALURU, DHNS: A software engineer and an autorickshaw driver were arrested by the Bengaluru police for allegedly posting obscene and derogatory content against Vijayalakshmi, the wife of jailed Kannada actor Darshan.

Darshan is currently facing trial in the murder of Renukaswamy from Chitradurga.

The arrested are Chandrashekar B, 45, an autorickshaw driver, from Chikkabanavara in Bengaluru and Nithin, 31, a software engineer, from Davangere.

The police said that on December 24, Vijayalakshmi filed a complaint at the Cybercrime Police Station, stating that certain individuals were posting low-level obscene, derogatory posts, comments and sending messages against her and her family on social media platforms.

She had sought legal action against more than 18 individuals who had posted such content.

A case was registered, and an investigation was launched. "During the investigation, the officials found that the suspects had posted obscene messages against Vijayalakshmi and her family on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms. Both individuals have been secured, and further investigation is in process. The search for the remaining accused is ongoing," the city police said in a statement.

Vijayapura protest: Police clear tent; seer, others booked

VIJAYAPURA, DHNS: There was much activity at the protest site in the city, where agitators have been demonstrating for the past 107 days demanding the establishment of a government medical college in the district.

At midnight on Thursday, the police cleared the tent that the protesters had erected at the protest site. Police have also prohibited entry to the protest site. Meanwhile, 21 of the 27 people arrested after they tried to lay siege to Minister M B Patil's house were released on Thursday night.

Over 13,000 trees in K'taka to face the axe for Goa-Tamnar power line

SBWL has cleared the controversial proposal

BENGALURU, DHNS

The controversial proposal to build a transmission line between Narendra in Dharwad to Xeldem in south Goa received the clearance of the State Board of Wildlife (SBWL) on Friday.

The SBWL looked into the proposal by Goa Tamnar Transmission Project limited seeking 79.13 acres in Castlerock range to build 400 kv transmission line. It involves felling of 3,248 trees within the protected area (PA) and more trees in forests outside the PA.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre, who had rejected the project in its original form, said the clearance was given after considering the Supreme Court order in the matter. He said that following our concerns and the apex court directions, changes had been made to reduce the impact of the project.

Apart from the 79.13 acres in Castlerock range of Dandeli Widlife Sanctuary, the project also requires 160.23 acres in the Haliyala forest division. Altogether, a little over 13,000 trees are expected to be felled for the project.

"The total number of trees proposed to be felled for the project had come down from 72,000 to 13,000. We have further advised them to explore reducing the numbers. I have asked for a comprehensive wildlife mitigation plan," he said.

Khandre further sought to stress that of the 79.13 acres sought in Castlerock range, 46.95 acres involve an area between Ganeshgudi substation and Ponda substation where a 220 kv line already exists. The use of the same right of way to build another transmission line has helped reduce the land required, he said, adding that more measures will be in place before works are taken up.

'Revise proposal for Shettihalli sanctuary'

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre on Friday told officials to bring all the forests that do not have encumbrance within the Shettihalli sanctuary.

Following a report by DH, Khandre in August 2025 had directed the forest department to ensure that all the notified forests, mini forests and Section 4 (lands proposed as reserved forests) to be included in the sanctuary limits.

In July 2025, DH reported that the state government's decision to shrink the sanctuary to 395.60 sq km violated the Wildlife (Protection) Act as well as Supreme Court orders. As per the boundary marked under Section 18 of the Act, the original extent of the sanctuary was 824 sq km. In August, DH had also pointed to the state government's move to drop 30,000 acres of notified forests from the sanctuary limits.

The presentation made during the SBWL meeting, however, failed to convince the minister. "I have told them to come up with a proposal where all the unencumbered forests are included," he said.

The government has said that 90 families of Kogilu Layout were eligible for the alternative housing scheme.

Govt defers allotment of flats to Kogilu families

Minister-MLA KBG to approve beneficiary names

BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government, which had proposed allotment of alternative houses to the families evicted from Kogilu Layout on Friday, has temporarily deferred its plan due to compliance issues.

While the Revenue Department and the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) are said to have completed the process of identifying the "eligible" beneficiaries, the government has not committed to the next date of allotment of flats.

Sources in the Housing department said the flats – constructed as part of Chief Minister's One Lakh Housing programme–would be allotted only after Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, who is also the MLA of Byatarayanapura Legislative Assembly constituency, returns from an overseas trip on Saturday.

As per the rules, the local MLA–as the head of the Ashraya Committee – is required to approve the names of beneficiaries of a housing project that is situated in their constituency.

The selection of beneficiaries has become a headache for the government, as some of the families evicted do not have the requisite documents to become eligible for the housing project, as well as the Onti Mane scheme, which provides financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh.

The Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd had demolished about 167 sheds for setting up waste-related plans, but the subsequent survey of revenue officials showed a different number of affected households. On Thursday, the government announced that 90 families were eligible for the alternative housing scheme.

Cap on CS & related engg streams seats from this year: Minister

Will soon constitute a committee to set guidelines: Sudhakar

BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government will impose a cap on Computer Science and related streams intake in engineering courses from the KCET 2026.

While releasing the 'CET Guide' on Friday, Higher Education Minister Dr M C Sudhakar said that the Department of Higher Education would form a one-man committee to study and submit the report.

"The freeze on Computer Science and related streams seats will be implemented from KCET 2026, and we will soon be constituting a committee to set guidelines," Sudhakar said.

Sharing more details, Sudhakar said that only in the case of new streams related to Computer Science will they be entertained. "If we receive requests for some new and emerging streams, for example, Quantum Computing. Any other existing Computer Science and related streams seats will not be enhanced," he clarified.

Higher Education Minister Dr M C Sudhakar and Medical Education Minister Dr Sharan Prakash Patil release a short guide providing information about the 2026 KCET in Bengaluru on Friday. H Prasanna, executive director of KEA and Khushboo Goel Chowdhary, secretary, Department of Higher Education, are also seen. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

The minister even mentioned that the government is planning to rationalise the intake in Computer Science and related streams.

Further, Sudhakar revealed that during the KCET 2025, of the total 1.53 lakh engineering seats available, around 99,000 were in Computer Science and related streams. "This year, we have completed the entire seat allotment process and over 15,000 engineering seats are left unfilled, of which 9,000 seats were again related to Computer Science and related streams," Sudhakar shared.

"Everyone knows what the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) replied when I wrote them requesting to streamline Computer Science seats in 2023. Now, we are taking action following the court orders in the Telangana government's decision on the same issue," Sudhakar said.

This cap will be applicable for all affiliated engineering colleges, both government and private and Private Universities. As Deemed-To-be Universities fall under the purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC), the government cannot impose regulation on them.

State records highest-ever organ donations in 2025, ranks third nationally

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka has recorded its highest-ever number of organ donations, with 198 donations registered in 2025, marking a significant milestone for the State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO).

This is the highest number achieved in the state's history, surpassing the previous record of 178 organ donations in 2023, officials said. With this, Karnataka ranks third in the country in organ donations in 2025, behind Tamil Nadu and Telangana. Tamil Nadu leads with 267 organ donations.

Provide temporary housing, human rights panel tells govt

BENGALURU, DHNS: In its interim recommendation, the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC) has directed the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) to provide a temporary housing facility for the families evicted from Kogilu layout in view of the cold weather.

The commission has also directed the authority to provide food, drinking water by setting up a facility in the nearby playground. It also wants the GBA to set up a mobile health centre for the benefit of displaced families.

The order was issued by T Sham Bhat, chairperson, and S K Vantigodi, member of the commission, on December 30.

On December 21, Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd (BSWML) had demolished 160 to 170 sheds which had come up on the government land in Kogilu Layout. Four private individuals had filed a complaint with the commission against the government officers on the charges of violating human rights. Subsequently, the members of the commission visited the site and interacted with the affected families.

Noting that it is the responsibility of the government to provide basic facilities to ensure dignity of life to the citizens, the commission issued the directions to provide temporary accommodation facilities.

KCET 2026 to be held on April 23, 24

KEA publishes 'CET guide' to help students fill application forms

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka Common Entrance Test (KCET) 2026 will be held on April 23 and 24. The online application submission process will begin from January 17. Kannada examination for Horanadu and Gadinadu Kannada candidates will be held on April 22.

The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) on Friday released the date sheet for the KCET 2026 and the authorities stated that this year the dates of all other examinations, including PGCET, DCET and KSET, have been released along with the KCET.

For the first time, the KEA has published a 'CET Guide', available both in Kannada and English, to help students to fill the application forms. "To help candidates to fill applications without errors, we have released a Guide and the same has been supplied to all pre university colleges, including those affiliated to other boards," said Minister for Higher Education Dr M C Sudhakar.

As explained by the minister, the CET Guide has complete and step-wise information on application filling and also complete information about the documents needed, verification process and seat allotment. This year, the KEA will open a Candidate Portal and candidates can download copies of application form, admission ticket, verification slip etc., by logging on to the portal.

Speaking about the decision to continue with the questions from the practical part of the PUC curriculum, Sudhakar said, "We have introduced practical-based questions in the KCET from 2025 and it will continue even for this year. This is basically to ensure that students concentrate even on practical classes."

In the CET guide released, the KEA has even cautioned parents and students about the middlemen. In the guide, the KEA has stated, "In matters related to CET, neither candidates nor parents should trust any middlemen and get cheated. Because, you should know that the seat allotment is done only on merit, based on the seat matrix provided by the government."

This year also it is OTP-based application filling and after the successful registration and login, candidates may proceed with entry of application details only after verifying the login plus OTP or live photo. The real candidate must provide his/her face identification at each subsequent stage.

KCET time table

Date	Time	Subject
April 23	10.30 am to 11.50 am 2.30 pm to 3.50 pm	Physics Chemistry
April 24	10.30 am to 11.50 am 2.30 pm to 3.50 pm	Mathematics Biology
April 22	10.30 am to 11.30 am	Kannada*

Other exams

- **March 1** KRIES (admissions to class 6 residential schools)
- **May 14** PGCET (MBA and MCA)
- **May 23** PGCET (ME/M.Tech) & DCET (Lateral entry to engineering courses)
- **July 18** M.Sc Nursing, MPT, MSc-AHS
- **Oct 11** KSET
- **Nov 21** M Pharma & Pharma-D

*Grade 4-level Kannada exam for Horanadu/Gadinadu Kannada candidates

How did illegal Bangla migrants get into B'luru, asks minister

MALUR (KOLAR DISTRICT), DHNS: Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy on Friday sought to turn the tables on the BJP, which has been alleging that those evicted in the demolition drive carried out at Kogilu Layout in North Bengaluru were illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

Interacting with journalists in Tornahalli in Malur, Reddy said, "The BJP is claiming that those who were evicted in Kogilu are illegal Bangladeshi migrants. If that is the case, then how did they get this far? What are Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah doing? If they have indeed come into this country illegally, let the Centre have them arrested."

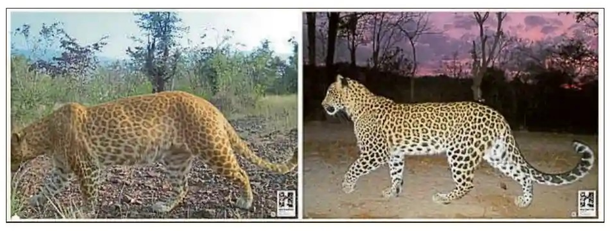
Researchers document 'Sandalwood' leopard in Karnataka

BENGALURU, DHNS

A big cat with an unusual colouration has been documented in Vijayanagara district, with researchers stating that the sighting of the 'sandalwood' leopard is the second confirmation documentation in the country.

Sanjay Gubbi and his team from the Holematthi Nature Foundation (HNF) documented the female leopard, estimated to be 6-7 years old, through camera trapping. In one of the later images, the female was photographed with a cub that displayed normal coat colouration and black rosettes.

HNF said leopards usually have tawny coats with black rosettes, but the exceptionally coloured morph exhibits a pale reddish-pink coat resembling the "hue of sandalwood" with light-brown rosettes. Internationally, leopards of this colour morph are referred to as "strawberry" leopards. They have been recorded in South Africa and Tanzania.



A comparison of the 'Sandalwood' leopard with that of one with normal colour. PHOTO: HNF

"In India, sandalwood leopards are extremely rare. A single individual was previously documented from the Ranakpur region of Rajasthan in November 2021, making the Vijayanagara record only the second confirmed documentation from the country," it said.

Gubbi said the colouration was consistent with conditions such as hypomelanism or erythrism, both of which are naturally occurring genetic traits identified in wild mammals.

"At present, this assessment is based on photographic evidence and visual characteristics. While these features are distinctive, confirmation of the exact genetic mechanism would require molecular analysis using DNA from non-invasive samples such as scat or hair. Until such genetic evidence is available, it is scientifically appropriate to describe this animal as a rare colour morph rather than assign a specific genetic condition," he explained.

Camera trapping was conducted as part of China's efforts to estimate leopard populations and identify key landscapes for large mammal conservation in the Kalyana-Karnataka region. HNF's research indicates that overall, Karnataka supports an estimated 2,500 leopards.

Heavy unseasonal rain destroys paddy crop in Malavalli taluk

MALAVALLI (MANDYA DISTRICT), DHNS:

Unseasonal heavy rain lashed various parts of the taluk on Thursday night.

Paddy crop on hundreds of acres of farmland has been submerged in rainwater, resulting in heavy losses to the farmers.

Somakanahalli, Talagavadi, Madahalli, Gudughatta, Kandegala, Nelluru, and Dugganahalli received heavy rain for some hours from 2 am on Thursday.

The paddy crop, which was harvested on hundreds of acres of land, was destroyed, and the unseasonal rain has created anxiety among the farmers.

Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha taluk president L N Bharat Raj demanded suitable compensation for the farmers affected due to the sudden rain.

Paddy crop submerged in rainwater at Nelamakanahalli in Malavalli taluk in Mandya district. DH PHOTO

The harvested paddy has been destroyed. As the crop has been submerged, the livestock will not get adequate fodder. The government should provide at least Rs 30,000 compensation, he urged.

Yelandur, Santhemarahalli and Gundlupet in the district received normal rain.

Survey findings don't disprove 'Vote Chori', says Siddaramaiah

CM flags 'conflict of interest' with nonprofit GRAAM

BENGALURU, DHNS

Findings of the 2024 Lok Sabha poll survey, commissioned by the Election Commission, do not disprove "serious concerns about electoral malpractice" that top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has raised, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Friday.

In an elaborate statement, Siddaramaiah said the contentious survey, whose report has been recalled by the government after it was made public, was not a political opinion poll.

"It was an end-line administrative evaluation of voter awareness under SVEEP programmes, commissioned by the Election Commission and conducted in May 2025. Its purpose was to assess voter education efforts - not to certify the integrity of electoral processes or respond to allegations that surfaced months later. An awareness survey cannot be twisted into a certificate of electoral integrity," Siddaramaiah said.

The CM pointed out that Gandhi raised the 'Vote Chori' issue "based on evidence" in August 2025. "Using pre-allegation data to dismiss post-allegation evidence is not fact-checking; it is intellectual sleight of hand," he said.

Siddaramaiah said that the sample size of 5,100 in a state having over 5.3 crore voters was "a microscopic fraction by any serious statistical standard".

"In constituencies like Bengaluru Central, where allegations of voter list manipulation are most acute, the respondent count runs into mere double digits. Projecting this as the definitive people's verdict is statistically indefensible," Siddaramaiah argued.

SIDDARAMAIAH
Chief minister

"The sample size of 5,100 in a state having over 5.3 crore voters is a microscopic fraction by any serious statistical standard.

Siddaramaiah flagged "conflict of interest" with the nonprofit GRAAM that conducted the survey. Its founder, R Balasubramaniam, holds a Union government position and had authored a book praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2024, he said.

Gandhi, Siddaramaiah said, has not questioned democracy or elections. "He has sought basic transparency from the EC on voter roll access, surveillance safeguards, EVM scrutiny, and the independence of the Election Commissioner appointment process -- questions that remain unanswered," he said.

Citing the example of alleged voter fraud in Aland, Siddaramaiah said the police had filed a 22,000-page charge sheet naming seven people, including a former BJP MLA.

"This investigation was conducted by our government despite winning the seat and it forced systemic changes by the Election Commission itself," he said. "A limited, pre-event administrative survey cannot bury criminal evidence, chargesheets, or unanswered questions."

We're professional, have no political allegiance: GRAAM

Says founder not involved for years

BENGALURU, DHNS

Mysuru-based Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement (GRAAM) said Friday it held no political or ideological allegiances, and it was selected by the Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority (KMEA) "through a competitive bidding process" for the 2024 Lok Sabha election survey.

GRAAM, which carried out the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP), has come under fire by Congress after the survey found that a majority of respondents trusted the election process and Electronic Voting Machines (EVM).

Congress alleged that GRAAM had a conflict of interest with its founder, R Balasubramaniam, holding a Union government position.

"He is the founder of the organisation, but holds no position or is involved with GRAAM in any capacity for several years now," GRAAM executive director Basavaraju R said in a statement.

In 2021, Balasubramaniam was appointed as a member of the Human Resources of the Capacity Building Commission (CBC), which is the executive body of the Mission Karmayogi framework of the Union government. He stepped down as chairperson of GRAAM's board of trustees on March 31, 2022, Basavaraju said.

Basavaraju specified that GRAAM was "not solely selected or preferred" to carry out the KAP survey.

"We were selected after passing through a competitive bidding process, having scored a high technical score, by a committee of experts duly constituted by KMEA. We passed through the stipulated processes of tendering and selection, competing with other agencies that had applied to undertake this study," Basavaraju said, adding that GRAAM operated under a professional board.

"GRAAM's role in this exercise was strictly limited to conducting the study as an independent research agency, in accordance with the methodology and ethical standards prescribed in the Terms of Reference (ToR) issued by KMEA. The design, execution, sample size, data collection and analysis followed established social research protocols based on the ToR issued to us," Basavaraju said, adding that GRAAM "stands by professional standards followed in conducting this study".

KMEA, which functions under the department of planning, programme monitoring and statistics, approved the final report in November 2025. GRAAM submitted printed copies of the report on December 1, 2025.

Chandra Prakash Goyal, member of the SC-appointed CEC, speaks to farmers on illegal mining and land encroachment in Bannerghatta National Park.

CEC to submit report on dilution of Bannerghatta ESZ

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) will submit a report to the Supreme Court detailing the impact of the reduction in the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around the Bannerghatta National Park (BNP), CEC member Chandra Prakash Goyal said on Friday.

Eco-Sensitive Zones act as buffer areas to regulate anthropogenic activities around protected forests.

The draft ESZ notification issued in 2016 proposed a buffer ranging from 100 metres to 4.5 km from the boundary of BNP. However, the state government revised the proposal in May 2018, and the final notification issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) reduced the maximum ESZ width to just 1 km. This revision shrank the total ESZ area from 268.8 sqkm to 168.84 sqkm. Spread across a core area of 260.51 sqkm, the BNP forms part of a larger 1,400-sqkm wildlife habitat and is recognised as the terminal point of the Mysuru Elephant Reserve. The park is home to elephants, tigers, leopards, dholes, sloth bears and several other species.

Goyal's visit to Bengaluru followed a writ petition filed before the apex court by KB Belliappa and others, challenging the reduction in the ESZ boundary. After a presentation by the petitioners, the CEC member held discussions with officials of the Forest Department.

Asked whether the CEC's report would specifically address concerns related to elephant corridors, Goyal said, "That is the basic plea in the petition."

The petitioners pointed out that BNP has three critical elephant corridors—the Karadikal–Madeshwara corridor, the Tali–Belikkal corridor and the Bilikal–Jawalagiri corridor.

They argued that the reduction in the buffer zone violates the ESZ Guidelines, 2001, issued by the MoEF&CC. Guideline 4.2 states that ecologically sensitive corridors, connectivity zones and important habitat patches extending beyond 10 km should be included within the ESZ.

Agriculture land turning into layouts

Farmers Somashekhar and Shivakumar, from villages around Bannerghatta, also met the CEC member to raise concerns over the conversion of agricultural land into residential layouts.

They alleged that although the final ESZ notification was issued only in 2020, government officials had been pressuring them to sell land as early as 2013.

Portions of land surrendered then were later developed into the Suryanagar Layout by the Karnataka Housing Board, they said.

Asked whether the CEC would examine allegations of a premeditated attempt to acquire farmland along the forest boundary and the mushrooming of resorts, Goyal said, "We will look into that."

Forest Department officials have linked the rapid conversion of farmland into layouts to the rise in human–leopard conflict in the region.

Cabinet approves 153-acre green space near Yelahanka

The Rs 250-cr biodiversity park to be named after Basavanna

BENGALURU, DHNS

The state Cabinet on Friday approved a plan to develop a 153-acre biodiversity park named after 12th-century social reformer Basavanna at Madappanahalli near Yelahanka.

Addressing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B Khandre explained that the Rs 250-crore worth project would be undertaken over three years, with Rs 50 crore granted for the first phase of works, which are expected to be completed in 10 months.

The biodiversity park will be named as Vishwaguru Basavanna Biodiversity Park.

The minister explained that the proposed biodiversity park would be the third biggest in Bengaluru after Lal Bagh and Cubbon Park.

"Earlier, 153 acres of land belonging to the Forest Department in Madappanahalli had been provided to the Karnataka Forest Development Corporation Limited. Now, this has been taken back, and the neelagiri trees will be removed in a phased manner, and replaced with local plant and tree varieties."

Khandre explained that Bengaluru was known by epithets such as "Garden City," "Pensioners' Paradise" due to the Lal Bagh (240 acres) and Cubbon Park (197 acres).

He also explained that the proposed biodiversity park was close to the upcoming BV Shivarama Karanth Layout.

1,000-bed hospital for organ transplantation

The Cabinet gave its approval to develop a 1,000-bed hospital for organ transplantation, at a cost of Rs 1,000 crore, near Nimhans.

Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil told reporters that the facility will come up in a public-private partnership (PPP) mode, in partnership with Azim Premji Foundation.

The entire cost of Rs 1,000 crore will be borne by the Foundation, which will also spend Rs 350 crore per year for hospital maintenance.

Terming it a "historic" decision, Patil noted that the entire project would take five years, adding that the Foundation would make arrangements for 300 beds in three years.

As many as 70% beds will be free of cost, while 30% beds will be given at the cost in place in government hospitals, he added.

When asked about the preference criteria for the 70% free beds, the minister SAID that priority would be given to BPL cardholders.

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आवेदन प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि 17.02.2026 है।
The last date of receiving applications is 17.02.2026

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Poll survey report vanishes from...

Survey, From Page 1

"A nonprofit founded by a man working in the prime minister's office did the survey," Hariprasad said.

"The survey is intended to protect the EC's image after the huge support Congress got for its December 14 protest against 'Vote Chori'," Hariprasad said.

Rejecting the survey's findings, Hariprasad said trust in the EC can be restored only if fair elections were held. "We haven't forgotten how Rs 10,000 was paid to beneficiaries in Bihar (just before elections). Now, the Assam CM has announced that Rs 8,000 will be given to women. They're not able to stop corruption in elections," he said.

IT/BT and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank said the survey was commissioned by the EC through the CEO. "The survey covered only 50 respondents per Assembly. Statistically weak, prone to wide sampling error, selection bias and not suitable for drawing conclusions," Priyank said.

He questioned the BJP's "silence" on the voter fraud at the Aland constituency in which the saffron party's former MLA is the prime accused.

Suburban rail cost up by Rs 1k cr but work snarls

Suburban, From Page 1

In a legal notice, L&T stated that even 22 months after the Letter of Acceptance (LoA), only 12.83 km or 49.44% of the work front was made available, that too, in "unworkable fragmented stretches".

Subsequently, K-RIDE re-tendered Corridor 2 while no such development has taken place on Corridor 1, 3 and 4.

Once completed, the BSRP is expected to carry close to 10 lakh passengers daily, potentially decongesting Bengaluru's notorious traffic congestion while enabling commuters with multiple options to plan their travel. The project took off only after a relentless citizen-led campaign but the slow progress has been a matter of concern.

Prison radicalisation case: NIA chargesheets 3 more accused

Cop, doc among three named in supplementary chargesheet

BENGALURU, DHNS

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday said that it has filed chargesheets against three more accused in the 2023 Bengaluru prison radicalisation case linked to the proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit.

The Central agency filed the supplementary chargesheet before a court in Bengaluru on Thursday. The agency has now named Anees Fathima, Chan Pasha A and Dr Nagaraj S, and charged them under various sections of IPC, UA(P) Act, Explosive Substances Act, Prevention of Corruption Act, and the Karnataka Prisons Act.

NIA, which took over the case from the local police in October 2023, had earlier chargesheeted nine accused, including absconder Junaid Ahmed.

"Among the three chargesheeted, Anees Fathima has been identified as Ahmed's mother. She had provided logistical support and funds to T Naseer inside Parappana Agrahara Central Prison, Bengaluru. She was also involved in handling hand grenades and walkie-talkies on her son's directives, and had facilitated communications between the various accused.

NIA investigations further revealed her key role in harbouring a key accused, Salman Khan, and helping him abscond to Dubai by arranging his travel documents.

Salman was subsequently extradited to India from the Republic of Rwanda," the agency said.

The probe revealed that Chan Pasha A, an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) at the City Armed Reserve-South, Bengaluru City, received illegal gratification from Salman for sharing information about the escort details of T Naseer, with whom he had connections while on prisoner escort duty.

"Dr Nagaraj S, a psychiatrist on deputation at Central Prisons Hospital, Parappana Agrahara, was involved in illegally smuggling mobile phones into the prison and selling them to the inmates for cash. One of these phones had reached T Naseer, who used it to communicate with his co-accused to conspire for promoting the terror plot," the agency said, adding that efforts were on to trace other absconding accused.

The case, originally registered by the Bengaluru City police in July 2023, related to the recovery of arms, ammunition and digital devices from habitual offenders who had planned to unleash terror in the city with the intent of disrupting India's sovereignty and security.

The activities, aimed at promoting the LeT's interests, were part of a larger conspiracy to facilitate the escape of T Naseer, a life convict in several terror cases, en route from the prison to the court. Naseer was an under-trial prisoner in the 2008 Bengaluru serial blast cases at the time.

Congress panel meeting on student polls on Jan 13

BENGALURU, DHNS: The committee constituted by the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee to examine the possibility of reviving the practice of holding elections at institutions of higher learning is expected to convene its first meeting on January 13.

Minister for Medical Education Dr Sharan Prakash Patil, who is also the convener of the committee, on Friday confirmed that the panel would meet on January 13. Citing his own experience in student politics, the minister said, "Many of us began our journey in politics on college campuses. We are also keen on bringing back elections in colleges, and are exploring all possibilities."

The committee will consult representatives of all student organisations on the issue, said the minister. "We will collect feedback from all stakeholders. We want to harness leadership abilities among students."

Elections were banned at colleges in the state 36 years ago, but DCM D K Shivakumar recently expressed his interest in reviving campus politics, and constituted a committee to examine the possibility of reintroducing elections at colleges.

'Menstrual leave'

Patil said that CM Siddaramaiah would take the final call on extending menstrual leave to girl students.

Cabinet 'condemns' G RAM G Act...

Cabinet, from Page 1

In the last 2.5 years, about 17 lakh village-level assets were created by panchayats under the MGNREGA and 80 lakh households were provided with livelihoods, Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge said last week.

Opposition parties have criticised the new Act for increasing the burden on the states. They have also opposed the clause to stop works for a period of 60 days each year.

In a recent letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Siddaramaiah criticised the "arbitrary" and "hurried" enforcement of the VB-G RamG Act, arguing that it violates Articles 258 and 280 of the Constitution.

He had told the PM that the legal guarantee of 125 days was not "absolute", since it was determined by a centrally notified "normative" funding for "notified" areas in each state.

Activists slam Centre for repeal of MGNREGA

Call new Act 'assault on federalism'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Rural workers and activists on Friday raised a banner of revolt against the Union government's decision to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-GRAMG) Act, 2025.

Speaking at a press conference organised by the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha, experts and worker representatives termed the move a "death knell" for the rights-based framework of rural employment.

They alleged the new Act, passed within 72 hours without public consultation, shifts the scheme from a demand-driven legal right to a "command-driven" central programme.

Fiscal burden on the state

The financial implications for Karnataka are particularly stark. Economist Vinod Vyasulu pointed out that under the new 60:40 cost-sharing ratio, the state's financial burden will quadruple.

NREGA activists display pamphlets against the VB G RAM G Act on Friday.

In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the state government spent Rs 573 crore under MGNREGA. To provide the same 13.12 crore person-days under the VB-GRAMG Act, the state would now have to shell out Rs 2,729 crore "If the state attempts to meet the promised 125 days of work, the cost would balloon to Rs 7,573 crore, severely crippling health and welfare allocations," Vyasulu warned.

Theft of dignity

Activists highlighted several "regressive" provisions, including a 60-day 'blackout period' during peak agricultural seasons.

"This pits workers against farmers and strips marginalised communities of their bargaining power," said Sharada Gopal of Jagruta Mahila Okkutta.

Advocate Clifton D'Rozario argued that the Act violates the 2018 Supreme Court order in the Swaraj Abhiyan case by absolving the Centre of liability for wage delays. Further, the shift toward "Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans" aligned with PM Gati Shakti was criticised as an assault on the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, turning local bodies into "labour suppliers for central contractors."

Nikhil Dey, a veteran activist, called the headline promise of 125 days a "scam," noting that the Centre currently struggles to provide even 50 days.

He highlighted that the new Act mandates biometric authentication and "geospatial planning," which activists fear will exclude the poorest workers whose fingerprints are often worn from manual labour.

The activists demanded the immediate restoration of MGNREGA, asserting that the new law "thefts the dignity" of Dalit and Adivasi workers.

Ballari SP suspended over...

Ballari, from Page 1

"We have come to know that it came from a private weapon. We are examining it. The FSL team is checking. Information will be shared. Footage has been gathered and is being analysed," he said.

In the three cases registered based on complaints by Congress leaders and Bharath's aides, Janardhana Reddy has been named the prime accused in the violent clashes.

IN all, 10 people, including former minister B Sriramulu, G Somashekara Reddy and other BJP leaders, have been named as accused under Sections 109 (attempt to murder), 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 191(2) (rioting), 189(2) (unlawful assembly), 118(1) (voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 190 (making every member of an unlawful assembly guilty of an offence committed), 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace), and 351(2) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, police added.

The police are also verifying multiple videos that show a close aide and private gunman of Bharath firing multiple rounds in the air and towards Janardhana Reddy's house. Workers from both parties, wielding stones, sticks and other weapons, were seen at the site, creating a ruckus.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has asked senior police officials to conduct an inquiry to ascertain whether the bullet that killed Rajashekar was fired from a gun belonging to BJP or Congress leaders.

Home Minister G Parameshwara told reporters in Bengaluru, "I have sent the ADGP (Law and Order) to visit the spot and see what has happened. I have ordered an inquiry and asked officials to submit a report."

To maintain law and order, additional forces — 10 Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) units and 12 District Armed Reserve (DAR) units from Chitradurga, Koppal, Davangere, and Vijayanagara districts — have been dispatched to Ballari.

R Hitendra, Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order), said so far no one has been arrested. "We have seized five guns so far," he said.

Wildlife board orders study to...

Safari, from Page 1

He added that there have been no attacks, deaths or injuries since the suspension of the safaris. There is pressure to restart safari.

Cricketer Anil Kumble, appointed as forest department's ambassador, said that safaris will not impact eco tourism. He said there were also concerns over the jobs of some of the people working in the eco tourism sector, Khandre said.

Siddaramaiah, who looked into the matter, directed that an expert committee should look into the matter. "The committee's opinion should be taken on reopening safaris in a phased manner as well as providing job opportunities to locals," the chief minister said.

Khandre, meanwhile, noted that the number of tigers in Bandipur has gone up from 12 in 1972 to 175-200 at present. Going by the expert opinion that a tiger requires about 10 sq km home range, Bandipur has twice the number of tigers than its area can support.

WEATHER

Overview: Dry weather prevailed over Coastal Karnataka, South Interior Karnataka and North Interior Karnataka

Forecast Jan 03: Dry weather likely to prevail over the state.

INTERIOR NORTH	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	29.2	15.4	00
Bidar	28.8	15.8	00
Vijayapura	29.1	15.5	00
Dharwad	28	15	00
Haveri	29.2	16.6	00
Kalaburagi	32.4	18.7	00
Raichur	29.4	17.4	00
COASTAL			
Honnavar	30.9	19	00
Karwar	31.6	20.4	00
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	30.9	22	00

INTERIOR SOUTH	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	NA	NA	NA
Bengaluru	26.4	19.1	00
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	NA	NA	NA
Chikkamagaluru	NA	NA	NA
Chitradurga	29.4	18.1	00
Davangere	30.5	14	00
Hassan	29.3	11.3	00
Mysuru	30	16	00
Madikeri	NA	NA	NA
Kolar	26.8	14.8	00
OTHER STATIONS			
New Delhi	17.3	9.1	00
Kolkata	24	12	00
Mumbai	29.3	19.4	00
Chennai	29.1	23.8	0.1
Pune	29.7	13.5	00
Hyderabad	27.1	18.3	00
Th'puram	34.7	23.8	00

KARNATAKA URBAN WATER SUPPLY & DRAINAGE BOARD
KALABURAGI ZONE, KALABURAGI
Office of the Chief Engineer KUWS & D Board, Kalaburagi Zone,
"Jalbhavan", Rajapur, Kusnoor Road, Kalaburagi - 585105. Tel : 08472-220817,
Fax : 08472-260818 E-mail ID : kwbceklb14@gmail.com

No. KWB/CE(K)/TEC/Aland NGR/2025-26/1261 Date: 31-12-2025

-: NOTICE INVITING TENDER – 3RD CALL :-

1) Detail of Work: Construction of 4.00 MLD capacity WTP at Hebli Road in Aland town under Nagarothan (phase-4) (Lumpsum-No Variation. **(Work Indent No : KUWSDB/2025-26/WS /WORK_INDENT468)**, 2) Amount of Estimate: **Rs. 357.94 Lakhs (Excluding GST),** 3) Eligibility of Contractor: Eligible Contractors, 4) Details of Tender application amount and EMD amount: Rs. 5,37,000/-, 5) Period of Completion: 12 Months (Twelve), 6) Date and Time for commencement of downloading of tender documents from the e-procurement portal: **02-01-2026 after 13:00 Hours**, 7) Date & Time of Pre-Bid Meeting: **16-01-2026 at 11:30 Hours**, 8) Last Date and Time for receipt of Tenders: **31-01-2026 up to 17:30 Hours**, 9) Date and Time for Opening of Tender: **02-02-2026 after 11:00 Hours**, 10) Addl. information : Office of the Chief Engineer, KUWS & D Board, Kalaburagi Zone, "Jalbhavan", Rajapur, Kusnoor Road, Telephone : 08472-220817, E-mail ID : kwbceklb14@gmail.com, 11) Address of E-portal: **www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Chief Engineer
DIPR/Kalaburagi/919/KSMC&A/2025-26 KUWS & D Board, Kalaburagi Zone, Kalaburagi

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDER (Through KPP portal only)

BWSSB invites Tenders from eligible contractors for the following Works:

Office of the Chief Engineer (South), 7th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K. G. Road, Bangalore-09.

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount	Last Date & Time for submission of tender	Date & Time for opening of tender
1.	South-2	BWSSB/EE(S2)/PB/1889/2025-26 Date : 31.12.2025	Rs.12,75,957/- / Rs.31,900/-	12-01-2026 upto 4.00 p.m.	13-01-2026 after 4.30 p.m.
2.		BWSSB/EE(S2)/PB/1891/2025-26 Date : 31.12.2025	Rs.15,26,117/- / Rs.38,200/-		
3.		BWSSB/EES2/TO/PB/1893/2025-26 Date : 31.12.2025	Rs.53,15,445/- / Rs.1,06,400/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (South-2).

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the signed office during working hours.

DIPR/CP/AAPL/RO4791/25-26

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN : U40109KA1999SGC025521)

No.: CEE/Tr(Op)Z/HSN/SEE (O)/AEE-3/F-T3/2025-26/12064-66 Date: 02.01.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through KPPP mode only)

KPTCL invites bids against tender No. through E-Procurement mode for "Combined package for providing 5.8MVar/2.9MVar 11kV Capacitor Banks at Tarikere 110/11kV sub-station, Lingadahalli 66/11kV sub-station, Lakkavalli 66/11kV sub-station, Balehonnuru 66/33/11kV sub-station & Ajjampura 110/11kV sub-station in Operation Division, KPTCL, Chikkamagaluru **on PTK basis.** (11kV Switchgear will be supplied by KPTCL)". **Tender No.:** KPTCL/2025-26/EL/ WORK_ INDENT3060/ CALL-2.

The detailed notification regarding subject enquiry in the E-Tendering process can be obtained by logging on to website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** with hyper link "tenders" **on or after 03.01.2026 at 11.00 hrs.** Other details can be had from the office of the undersigned.

Sd/- Chief Engineer, (Elec.) Transmission (Operation) Zone, KPTCL, 3rd Floor, Prasarana Bhavana, Santhepete, B.M. Road, Hassan-573 201

KARNATAKA NEERAVARI NIGAM LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)
Office of the Executive Engineer, KNNL No.2 Division, Oddarahatti Camp, Tq: Gangavathi, Dist: Koppal

No.EE/KNNL/No.2CD/TS/AE-3/2025-26/ 1327, Date:31-12-2025

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Only through Kpp-procurement system)

On behalf of the Managing Director KNNL Bangalore the Executive Engineer No.2 Division Odderahatti camp the undersigned invites in https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in percentage basis tenders for Eligible KPWD Civil contractors. The tender is invited in Two Cover System for the following Works.

Work No: 1.Indent No: KNNL/2025-26/ OW/WORK_INDENT 3456 Amount put to tender (including GST) in Rs.: **4,63,95,279/-** EMD In Rs: **5,89,800/-** Category: **General**
2. Indent No: KNNL/2025-26/ OW/WORK_INDENT 3458 Amount put to tender (including GST) in Rs: **4,87,95,375/-0** EMD In Rs: **6,20,300/-** Category: **General**
3. Indent No: KNNL/2025-26/ OW/WORK_INDENT 3459 Amount put to tender (including GST) in Rs: **3,19,94,704/-** EMD In Rs: **4,06,750/-** Category: **General**
4. Indent No: KNNL/2025-26/ OW/WORK_INDENT 3137 Amount put to tender (including GST) in Rs: **63,98,064/-** EMD In Rs: **54,500/-** Category: **SC**
5. Indent No: KNNL/2025-26/ OW/WORK_INDENT 3138 Amount put to tender (including GST) in Rs: **25,97,364/-** EMD In Rs: **25,000/-** Category: **Cat-1**
6. Indent No: KNNL/2025-26/ OW/WORK_INDENT 3139 Amount put to tender (including GST) in Rs: **47,98,000/-** EMD In Rs: **40,700/-** Category: **ST**

Related to this additional details etc are available in above website. Pre bid meeting will be held on dtd: **13-01-2026** @ 11.30 AM at EE KNNL No 2 canal Division Odderahatti Camp. The last date for submission of tender Document upto dtd: **31-01-2026** upto 04.30 PM. The details can be viewed from web site https://KPPP. Karnataka.gov.in) & Date of Opening of Technical Bid on dtd: **02-02-2026** at 11.00 AM & Financial Bid on dtd: **03-02-2026** at 11.10 AM or after obtaining approval to technical bid. The Officer competent to accept the tender shall have the right to postponement or reject any all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever. For more information visit to website given above or contact at office in all working days during office hours

Sd/-Executive Engineer, KNNL
No.2 Canal Division Odderahatti
DIPR/Koppal/587/KSMCA/2025-26 **Tq: Gangavathi Dist: Koppal**

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ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:ಕಾಪಾಅ/ಪಂರಾಇಂ/ವಿಯಾ/5054ಮಳೆ.ಪ./ಟೆ.ಪ್ರ/ತಾಸ–1/2025–26/ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 02.01.2026

ಸಂಕ್ಷಿಪ್ತ ಟೆಂಡರ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ (ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ) (ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾತ್ರ)

1) ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಯ ಹೆಸರು ಮತ್ತು ಇಂಡೆಂಟ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಸುರಪೂರ ತಾಲೂಕಿನ ಹಾವಿನಾಳ ಗ್ರಾಮದಿಂದ ಸುರಪುರ ಮುಖ್ಯರಸ್ತೆ ವರೆಗೆ ರಸ್ತೆ ಮತ್ತು ಚರಂಡಿ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣ RDPR/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT20529 2) ಲೆಕ್ಕ ಶೀರ್ಷಿಕೆ: 2024–25ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ 5054 ಮಳೆ ಪರಿಹಾರ ಅನುದಾನ ಯೋಜನೆ 3) ಟೆಂಡರಿಗಿಟ್ಟ ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ: ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಮತ್ತು ಗರಿಷ್ಠ ರೂ. 100.00 ಲಕ್ಷ 4) ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರ ದರ್ಜೆ: 3ನೇ ಮೇಲ್ಪಟ್ಟು ದರ್ಜೆ ಮೇಲ್ಪಟ್ಟು 5) ಟೆಂಡರ ಫಾರಂ ಪಡೆಯಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 05.01.2026 ರಿಂದ 14.01.2026 ಸಾಯಂಕಾಲ 4:00 ಗಂಟೆವರೆಗೆ 6) ಟೆಂಡರ ಅರ್ಜಿ ಬೆಲೆ ಮತ್ತು ಇ.ಎಂ.ಡಿ. ಮೊತ್ತ: ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ನಮೂದಿಸಿದಂತೆ (ಅರ್ಜಿ ಶುಲ್ಕ ಹಿಂದಿರುಗಿಸಲಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲಾ) 7) ಟೆಂಡರ ಫಾರಂ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಅಂತಿಮ ದಿನಾಂಕ : 14.01.2026 ಸಾಯಂಕಾಲ 4:00 ಗಂಟೆವರೆಗೆ 8) ಟೆಂಡರ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ ತಾಂತ್ರೀಕ :17.01.2026 ಬೆಳ್ಳಿಗೆ 11:00 ನಂತರ 9) ಟೆಂಡರ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ: 21.01.2026 ಬೆಳ್ಳಿಗೆ 11:00 ನಂತರ 10) ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬೇಕಾದ ವಿಳಾಸ (ಕಛೇರಿ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ): ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ ಪಂಚಾಯತ ರಾಜ್ ಇಂಜಿನೀಯರಿಂಗ್ ವಿಭಾಗ, ಯಾದಗಿರ. 11) ಅಂತರಜಾಲ ತಾಣದ ವಿಳಾಸ: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in

ಸೂಚನೆ :– ಟೆಂಡರರಿಗೆಸಂಬಂದಿಸಿದ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಳನ್ನು ಈ ಕಛೇರಿಯಿಂದ ಕಛೇರಿ ಅವಧಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅಥವಾ https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದು (ರಜಾದಿನಗಳು ಹೊರತುಪಡಿಸಿ).

ಸಹಿ/– ಕಾರ್ಯಪಾಲಕ ಇಂಜಿನೀಯರರು,
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UNIVERSITY OF HORTICULTURAL SCIENCES, BAGALKOT
Office of the Estate Officer, Udyanagiri,
Near Simikeri By-Pass, Bagalkot – 587104

No: SPO/EO/UHSB/TN-212/2025-26 Date: 02-01-2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The University of Horticultural Sciences, Bagalkot is inviting tender for the **Online / Offline Training Programme for SC/ST students of the use of various campus of the university. The interested suppliers are requested to participate in the tender online through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal.** For more details, please contact **Ph.No: 08354-230258** and visit the link **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** for detailed specification, conditions and schedule of events and notification.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

1) Last date and time for tender queries / clarification : 10-01-2026 @ 14:00 Hrs. 2) Last date and time for receipt of tenders: 17-01-2026 @ 16.00 Hrs 3) Date and time for opening of Technical Bid : 19-01-2026 @ 11.00 Hrs 4) Date and time for opening of Financial Bid (if possible): 21-01-2026 @ 12.00 Hrs

All bidders shall get updated with corrigendum / addendum received from time to time during the entire tender process by visiting KPP portal.

DIPR/Bagalkot/481/Manipal/2025-26 **sd/- ESTATE OFFICER, UHS, BAGALKOT**

'Bad neighbour' backing terror can't expect goodwill, says Jaishankar

EAM takes a veiled jibe at Pakistan, says India has right to defend itself

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

Even as it extended a hand of friendship to Bangladesh, expressing hope that the "sense of neighbourliness" will grow once things settle down after elections, India on Friday sent out another stern message to Pakistan, warning that it will continue to exercise the right to defend its people if the country "deliberately, persistently and unrepentantly" pursues terrorism.

Dubbing Pakistan a "bad neighbour" without naming it directly, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the country cannot expect India to share water while continuing to harbour terrorists. He added that Islamabad should not expect the benefits of "good neighbourliness" that are extended to others.

In a fireside chat at IIT Madras, Jaishankar said India was among the few ancient civilisations in the world that have survived, adapted and evolved into a major modern nation-state, giving the country a deep historical continuity that most nations do not possess.

One of the students asked him how India planned to recalibrate its 'Neighbourhood First' policy while maintaining non-interference and protecting its interests amid volatile domestic politics in Bangladesh.

Responding not just in the context of Bangladesh but from the perspective of the entire neighbourhood, Jaishankar said India has both good and bad neighbours, and most of them recognise that they will have more opportunities to grow since India's growth is a "lifting tide" for the region.

"In a sense, this is the message I took to Bangladesh as well. They are heading into their elections, and we wish them well. We hope that once things settle down, the sense of neighbourliness in this region will grow," Jaishankar said.

He also spoke about how India went the extra mile in supporting countries that displayed a "sense of good neighbourliness", such as Sri Lanka during its unprecedented economic crisis, and during the Ukraine war when nations faced fuel and fertiliser shortages. Jaishankar also noted how India extended assistance to its neighbours by shipping vaccines during the Covid pandemic.

Referring to Pakistan as a country to India's west, the minister suggested that Islamabad would not enjoy the "benefits of good neighbourliness" unless it stopped patronising terrorism.

"If a country decides to deliberately, persistently and unrepentantly continue with terrorism, we have the right to defend our people. How we exercise that right is up to us. Nobody can tell us what we should or should not do," he said.

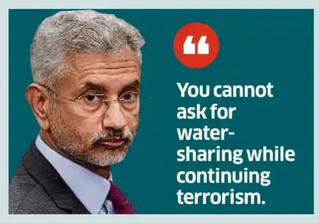
The minister said no goodwill gesture extended to Pakistan by India in the past has been reciprocated in the right manner, citing the example of the water-sharing arrangement between the countries.

"The belief was that it was a gesture of goodwill, an act of neighbourliness. But if you have decades of terrorism and no good neighbourliness, you don't get the benefits. You cannot say, 'Please share water with me, but I will continue terrorism against you.' That is not reconcilable," Jaishankar added.

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

Jaishankar says India will defend its people if terrorism continues 'deliberately, persistently, unrepentantly'

Says 'bad neighbour' cannot expect benefits extended to 'good neighbours'



"You cannot ask for water-sharing while continuing terrorism.

Palghar tunnel breakthrough for bullet train project

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday virtually witnessed the final breakthrough of a 1.5-km mountain tunnel for the bullet train project in Maharashtra's Palghar district, from Rail Bhawan in New Delhi.

"This 1.5-km mountain tunnel is among the longest in Palghar district and lies between the Virar and Boisar bullet train stations. It marks the second tunnel breakthrough in Maharashtra, following the completion of the 5-km underground tunnel between Thane and BKC in September 2025," a Railway Ministry press note said.

The tunnel was excavated from both ends and completed within 18 months using a cutting-edge drill-and-blast method.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project spans a total length of 508 km, with an overall tunnel length of 27.4 km — comprising 21 km of underground tunnels and 6.4 km of surface tunnels.

The project includes eight mountain tunnels, seven of which are in Maharashtra with a combined length of about 6.05 km, and one measuring 350 metres in Gujarat.

It is India's only high-speed rail project, designed to operate bullet trains at a speed of 320 kmph, covering the distance in just 1 hour and 58 minutes while connecting and integrating the economies of major commercial centres.

The project is being executed with technical and financial assistance from the Japanese government.

BJP flays Mamdani for letter to Umar Khalid

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The BJP has alleged that newly elected New York mayor Zohra Mamdani is part of an "anti-India lobby" spread globally and that the lobby has the support of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

The allegation came after Mamdani's recent letter to Umar Khalid, the former Jawaharlal Nehru University student leader who is currently incarcerated under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in connection with the 2020 Delhi riots case.

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said that if India's sovereignty is challenged, 140 crore Indians will stand united under PM Modi's leadership. "If anybody comes out in support of any accused and interferes in India's internal matters, the country will not tolerate it... Who is this outsider to raise questions on our democracy and judiciary, and that too coming in support of a person who wants to break India?"

Another party spokesperson, Pradeep Bhandari, posted a photograph of Rahul along with US lawmakers Janice Schakowsky and Ilhan Omar, alleging that every time an "anti-India narrative" is "peddled" abroad, Rahul's name finds mention.

SNDP gen secy faces flak for calling journalist 'extremist'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS: Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) general secretary Vellappally Natesan is being widely criticised for calling a television journalist "extremist".

Thiruvananthapuram Press Club and Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) flayed him and demanded action against him.

The controversy started on Wednesday when a journalist questioned Natesan about his comments on the Malappuram district. Television footage showed him reacting angrily and pushing aside the journalist's microphone, asking him to move away. At a press conference held on Friday, Natesan said the journalist was an extremist and a spokesperson for Muslims.

Rahul slams govt over Indore water contamination deaths

Says PM Modi is silent whenever the poor die

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday described BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh as the "epicentre of misgovernance" after around a dozen people died due to consumption of contaminated water.

The Congress leader also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of remaining silent whenever the poor died.

Rahul said there was "no water — just poison being distributed" while the Indore administration "slumbered like Kumbhakarna".

"Every home is filled with mourning, the poor are helpless — and on top of that, BJP leaders are making arrogant statements. Those who lost their lives and livelihoods needed solace; the government offered arrogance," he posted on X.

He also said people repeatedly complained about the "dirty, foul-smelling water", but there was no response from the authorities.

"How did sewage mix into the drinking water? Why wasn't the supply shut off in time? When will action be taken against the responsible officers and leaders?" he asked.

Rahul said these were not meaningless questions but demands for accountability.

"Clean water isn't a favour; it's a right to life. And the BJP's double-engine government, its negligent administration, and its callous leadership are entirely responsible for the murder of this right," he claimed.

"Madhya Pradesh has now become the epicentre of misgovernance — deaths from cough syrup in one place, rats in government hospitals claiming children's lives in another, and now deaths from drinking sewage-mixed water," he said.

"And every time the poor die, Modi, as always, remains silent," he added.

STRONG WORDS

- 'Every home is filled with mourning, poor are helpless – and... BJP leaders are making arrogant statements'
- 'Those who lost their lives, livelihoods needed solace; government offered arrogance'
- 'MP has become epicentre of misgovernance'

Family members of a victim, who died after consumption of allegedly contaminated water, mourn in Indore on Friday. PTI

'Shamed, disgraced': Uma Bharti

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The deaths in Madhya Pradesh due to water pollution drew sharp reactions from former chief minister Uma Bharti, who said the tragedy had "shamed and disgraced" the BJP government in the state,and called it a testing time for current CM Mohan Yadav.

In a series of posts on X, Bharti — who has also served as the Union minister for water and sanitation in 2017-19 — called for accountability from those in charge. She said Indore's reputation as the cleanest city had been marred by the "ugliness, filth, and poisoned water" that claimed lives.

"A severe atonement must be made for this sin, an apology must be sought from the affected people, and maximum punishment must be given to all the culprits from bottom to top," she demanded.

Bharti said that not just the mayor of Indore, but the MP governance and administration must be held accountable.

She asked which officials admitted that their plan had failed, and why they still retained their positions. "When your plan didn't work, why did you continue to drink Bisleri water while sitting in your position? Why did you not step down and reach out to the public? There is no explanation for such sins — either atonement or punishment."

She also apologised to the media fraternity for not being able to meet them after the incident. Her post came against the backdrop of a heated exchange between a journalist and senior BJP leader Kailash Vijayvargiya, who abused a scribe for questioning him about the deaths and the water pollution that caused them.

Govt to roll out Drone Shakti Mission in indigenous push

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

With Chinese components being used extensively in drones made in India, the Union government is set to incentivise domestic manufacturers to make such parts, while also encouraging R&D programmes to design and develop high-end unmanned aerial vehicles, said a top government official on Friday.

"...We aim to achieve technological sovereignty. Our manufacturers should not merely assemble imported parts," said Principal Scientific Advisor Ajay Sood.

To be run by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the mission plan is likely to be placed before the Union Cabinet for approval soon, sources told *DH*.

In 2021, the Union government introduced new rules for drones, reducing paperwork and costs of owning, manufacturing, and operating them. The rules boosted the indigenous industry, which includes over 100 manufacturers and more than 200 service-providers.

A big challenge for Indian manufacturers is overcoming the dominance of Chinese parts, like semiconductors, magnets, and batteries. China controls much of the global drone supply chain, triggering security concerns.

The Indian armed forces, one of the largest buyers of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and counter-UAV systems, are putting in place a stringent mechanism to detect Chinese signatures in products procured from Indian manufacturers. Earlier, the government cancelled contracts with Indian companies after finding Chinese parts in their drones.

A critical second pillar of the Drone Shakti Mission will be to get academic institutions to launch research programmes on high-end components like flight controllers and cameras. "This will be administered by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) and address the gap areas in drone research," said Sood.

At the same event, Union Science Minister Jitendra Singh said the Research, Development and Innovation Fund of Rs 1 lakh crore, aimed at directly supporting private sector R&D, was an unprecedented step.

"Complementing this, the ANRF has been established to democratise research funding, expand participation beyond elite institutions, and mobilise nearly 50-60% of its resources from non-government sources," he said.

Tech sovereignty

Mission aims at tech sovereignty, not just assembly of imported parts

Ministry of Civil Aviation to run programme; Cabinet nod likely soon	ANRF to administer programme, addressing gaps in drone research

Move comes at a time Chinese dominance is raising security concerns

RSS is no paramilitary organisation: Bhagwat

BHOPAL, PTI: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said that despite the uniform and physical exercises, the Sangh is not a para-military organisation, and it would also be a huge mistake to try to understand it by looking at the BJP.

The RSS works for uniting society and imbuing it with the necessary qualities and virtues to ensure that India does not fall into the clutches of a foreign power again, he said, speaking before a gathering of prominent persons here. "We wear a uniform, take out marches and do stick exercise. (But) If someone thinks it is a paramilitary organisation, it will be a mistake," he said, adding that it was difficult to understand the Sangh which was a unique organisation.

"If you want to understand the Sangh by looking at the BJP, it will be a huge mistake. The same (mistake) will happen if you try to understand it by looking at Vidya Bharti (an RSS-affiliated organisation)," he said.

Bhagwat also said that a "false narrative" is being built against the Sangh. "Nowadays people do not go deep to gather the right information... Those who go to reliable sources will get to know about the Sangh."

3 students booked for ragging; prof for sexual assault in HP

SHIMLA/DHARAMSHALA (HP), PTI

Three students of a government college in Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala have been booked for ragging and voluntarily causing hurt while a professor has been booked for sexual harassment of a 19-year-old woman who died on December 26, police said on Friday.

The student died during treatment at a Ludhiana hospital on December 26 and the case was registered on Thursday following a complaint by the father of the victim.

In his complaint, the deceased student's father alleged that his daughter was beaten by three seniors, Harshita, Aakriti and Komolika, on September 18, while a college professor, Ashok Kumar, indulged in obscene acts with her.

Due to the beating and harassment, the student was hospitalised and died during treatment, the complaint said. The father of the deceased woman alleged that following these incidents, his daughter went into severe mental stress and fear, leading to a rapid deterioration in her health.

He said the complaint could not be lodged earlier as his daughter was traumatised and had to be hospitalised.

A case under sections 75 (sexual harassment), 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 3(5) (common intention) of BNS and Section 3 of Himachal Pradesh Educational Institution (Prohibition of) Ragging Act 2009 has been registered and investigations are underway, the police said.

Kangra SP Ashok Ratan said that all the allegations are being thoroughly investigated. Medical records, video evidence and statements of all concerned are being examined, he added.

The case gained momentum after a video allegedly recorded by the student before her death went viral on social media.

CRUISE CONTROL

An aerial view of boats anchored at the Sangam on the eve of the Paush Purnima snan during the Magh Mela, in Prayagraj, on Friday. PTI

'TMC will win at least 1 more seat than 2021'

KOLKATA, PTI: Ahead of the 2026 assembly polls in West Bengal, TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee on Friday asserted that the ruling party will win at least one seat more than its tally five years ago.

The TMC had, in 2021, won 213 seats in the 294-member assembly.

Addressing a rally in Baruipur in South 24 Parganas district, he alleged that the 'anti-Bengal' NDA government at the Centre 'blocked funds for road projects and the 100-day rural employment scheme', and 'now it wants to deprive poor people of their democratic rights through the ongoing Special Intensive Revision' (SIR) of electoral rolls.

He also claimed that the BJP was responsible for the 'unplanned' SIR exercise that 'led to the deaths of many people in the state'.

The Election Commission had on December 16 published West Bengal's draft electoral rolls following SIR, deleting the names of more than 58 lakh voters on various grounds, including death and migration.

"My battle to fight against such forces starts from today. Mark my word — the TMC will win at least one seat more than our tally in the 2021 assembly polls," the Diamond Harbour MP said.

During the TMC programme, Banerjee presented three people, including a woman in the district, claiming that they were reported dead in the SIR draft rolls.

Children hold cutouts of Abhishek Banerjee during a public rally in West Bengal'S Baruipur on Friday. PTI

Centre, state should fight jointly to curb drug menace: Stalin

CHENNAI, DHNS: Battling criticism that the movement of drugs in the state has increased manifold in the past few years, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Friday asked Central agencies to plug the gateways and monitor borders to prevent the entry and interstate smuggling of narcotic substances.

In his speech after the flagging off of a yatra against drugs launched by ally MDMK's chief Vaiko and boycotted by Congress since the invitation sported a picture of LTTE leader V Prabhakaran, Stalin spoke about the drug menace in the state.

The CM's comments come close on the heels of the brutal attack by four juveniles on a 20-year-old youth from Odisha, allegedly under the influence of drugs.

"Drug trade is a massive network. Both state and Union governments must collaborate to dismantle it. Seaports allow massive inflows of drugs, and we continuously read news articles about this. We should close entry points, and central agencies must vigilantly monitor borders and interstate smuggling with help from states," Stalin said.

He added that the police seized over a lakh tablets from the Tiruvallur, Vellore, and Ranipet districts in Tamil Nadu, which were linked to Maharashtra, Andhra, Telangana, and Haryana.

NIA takes Red Fort blast accused to J&K's Shopian for searches

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted searches on Friday in South Kashmir's Shopian and adjacent Pulwama districts in connection with the November 10, 2025, car explosion near Delhi's Red Fort, said officials.

The operation was a part of an ongoing investigation into what security agencies have described as a sophisticated "white-collar terror module" being behind one of the deadliest attacks in the national capital in recent years.

The probe agency brought the ninth accused in the case, Yasir Ahmad Dar, to the search sites after being taken from his custody in Delhi, officials said.

Dar, a resident of Shopian, was arrested by the NIA on December 18 and is being interrogated in connection with the blast that killed at least 11 people and injured dozens.

'Active role'

Investigators said he was in close contact with other key suspects, including suicide bomber Dr Umar-un-Nabi and cleric Mufti Irfan, and had an "active role" in the conspiracy.

Teams searched multiple locations around Padpawan in Shopian and Pampore in Pulwama based on leads provided by Dar, said an official, although details of any recoveries were not disclosed. J&K Police and CRPF personnel assisted the agency in the operation.

The Red Fort blast investigation has uncovered a terror module allegedly involving highly educated individuals, including doctors, clerics, and professionals, linked to banned extremist groups such as the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).

Authorities say the network operated across Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, with a presence at Al-Falah University in Haryana's Faridabad, where several accused worked and where probes have extended to financial irregularities and alleged terror links.

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

Gig workforce needs a policy incentive

The nationwide strike by gig workers on New Year's eve has drawn attention to the working conditions in this sector and the state of the gig economy. Niti Aayog estimates the number of gig and platform workers in India in 2029-30 at 2.35 crore, rising from one crore in 2024-25. Poised for significant growth, the sector employs a major segment of the country's workforce, but as unorganised and casual employees, these workers are not entitled to labour protection and most welfare measures. Studies and discussions have underscored their poor working conditions and demands, but the platforms have not responded well. A token strike called by the workers on December 25 disrupted deliveries in some places. Wednesday's stir did not have a major impact on services, but the two strikes have revived discussions around the workers' rights.

The demands raised by the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers include a rollback of 10-minute delivery models, a fair and transparent wage system, social security including health benefits, accident insurance and pension, end to arbitrary and algorithmic penalties, and regulation of platform companies under labour laws. These workplaces do not follow a traditional employer-employee relationship and offer no scope for direct negotiations involving the management. Most of the employees are overworked and poorly paid. According to a survey, over 80% of them work more than 10 hours a day and most earn below Rs 15,000 per month. Many have faced arbitrary ID deactivation; the conditions are stressful and inhuman for most, especially for personnel in the 10-minute delivery stream. The government has stated that gig workers are covered under the Code on Social Security, which came into force last month, and are therefore entitled to a host of welfare measures. But these claims need to be viewed in context of formal coverage of the workforce – it has been noted that only 5% of gig workers are registered on the e-Shram portal.

The grievances are rising. Worker welfare must be brought under a regulatory framework

While the workplace conditions and the workers' demands have been recognised, the challenge will be in translating assurances into practice. Mandatory contributions of 1-2% of the aggregator's turnover to a social security fund, and Aadhaar-linked universal account numbers are important steps. But it is not known how the social security schemes will be implemented. *Ad hoc* incentives and payouts will not suffice. The grievances call for strong regulatory oversight on work hours, wages, and other benefits, in accordance with the law. At a time when governments are bringing forward legislation to ensure fair wages and welfare measures for gig workers, India cannot afford to look away.

A necessary cleanup, but conditions apply

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's recent lament about a powerful mafia choking Bengaluru's garbage clearance has now been followed by action. The new 33-package garbage tender floated by the Bangalore Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML) marks a serious attempt to impose discipline on a system long defined by chaos, cartels, and collusion. It signals intent; whether it delivers outcomes will depend on how firmly the state holds the line. At the heart of the new policy is a penalty-driven framework. Contractors can be fined Rs 5,000 for failing to clean markets, gardens or accumulated debris. If more than 10% of sanitation workers are absent, a penalty of Rs 500 per missing worker will apply. Crucially, 20% of monthly payments will be withheld and released only after penalties are deducted, reversing the traditional problem of chasing defaulters after full payment. Monitoring will rely on attendance logs, GPS data, and verified complaints, reducing discretion and, in theory, corruption.

These are welcome reforms. Bengaluru's waste management history is littered with ghost workers, fake vehicle trips and inflated tonnage scams, all shielded by a nexus of contractors and local politicians. Consolidating 89 ward-level packages into 33 larger ones is also a strategic attempt to weaken the grip of local syndicates and attract more professional operators. However, the tender has visible blind spots. The Rs-100 fine per black spot is laughably low. For a contractor, it may be cheaper to absorb the penalty than to permanently monitor a chronic dumping site. This risks institutionalising filth rather than eliminating it. More importantly, the policy punishes contractors for failures that often stem from flawed civic design. Bengaluru's 'no public dustbin' philosophy works only when door-to-door collection is perfectly timed, but the ground reality is different. Employees working night shifts often miss early morning collection vehicles. With no alternatives, waste inevitably lands on street corners, creating black spots for which contractors are fined.

Fines on erring contractors is a start. However, Bengaluru's waste crisis calls for solutions outside landfills

Part of the solution may lie in reintroducing strategically placed segregation dustbins, which can act as overflow buffers, but they may prove counterproductive if not cleared regularly. Evening collection rounds in high-density corridors and a rapid expansion of 'kasa kiosks' – designated drop-off stations for pre-segregated waste into colour-coded bins – are essential. The government must invest with the same seriousness in scientific waste treatment, decentralised processing, and waste-to-energy solutions, rather than continuing an unsustainable dependence on landfills. The new tender narrows the grey areas in which the garbage mafia thrives. But only consistent enforcement will prevent it from being scuttled by vested interests. Bengaluru does not merely need a well-written contract; it needs the courage to implement it.

BEYOND THE REPO

RBI's pragmatic shift: Rate cut amid robust growth

In the latest rate cut, there is a new realisation that inflation targeting and policy rates alone cannot steer growth

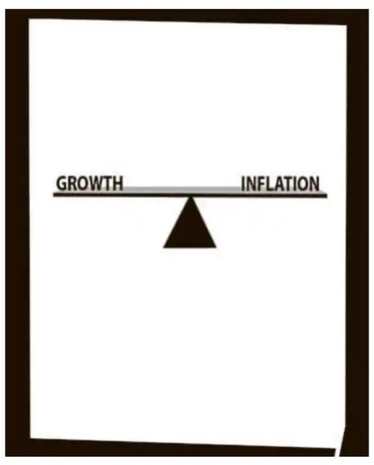
GOURISHANKAR S HIREMATH AND NEHA SHARMA

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut the repo rate by 25 basis points, lowering it from 5.5% to 5.25%. After earlier signalling limited room for further easing, the rate cut appeared surprising. A gross domestic product (GDP) real growth of 8.2% and an average headline inflation rate of 1.7% for Q2 of FY25-26, lower than its target of 4%, may make the central bank's move appear counterintuitive. Nevertheless, the RBI's decision to cut the rate was an implicit recognition of the limits of interest rate-focused monetary policy within India's economic structure, and an informed move to maintain growth momentum.

Since adopting inflation targeting in 2016, monetary policy decisions have become more forward-looking. With the RBI committed to keeping inflation near 4%, interest rate moves must reflect expectations about where inflation is likely to go, rather than where it stands today. Although inflation targeting focuses on consumer prices, Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation in India remains influenced by food prices. These movements are critical for household and welfare at large, but can obscure demand pressures and the broader inflation outlook. Food inflation is often driven by supply shocks, such as weather events, global commodity prices, and distribution bottlenecks, making it less responsive to monetary policy tightening. The current lower inflation is primarily due to a favourable base and kharif outlook, with food-price corrections also aided by government price-stabilisation actions, including imports and buffer stocks, rather than an interest-rate-focused monetary policy. Hence, low headline inflation does not, by itself, offer a reliable guide to future inflation trends.

This is why underlying demand conditions are a critical guide for monetary policy. It may be plausible to argue that current real robust growth should lead to a straightforward rate hike, given expected inflationary pressures. This kind of stance is possible only when the underlying demand is genuinely strong and likely to push inflation up over the policy horizon. However, the reality and complexity of the economy are different. Inflation typically responds to changes in consumption and investment with a lag, making growth indicators a crucial reference point for anticipating future inflationary pressures. But when transmission frictions exist, headline growth numbers alone can be a poor guide to the strength of demand.

The current real growth, although partly boosted by a low GDP deflator, suggests that overall growth remains upbeat, even as underlying demand and pricing power appear weaker. India still has potential for growth, scope for supply expansion, a large



informal sector, and relatively weak pricing power for the majority of economic agents. Sustaining growth may require supportive financial conditions, fewer frictions, and better formalisation. In the absence of such conditions, a rate hike could have adverse effects, especially for credit-constrained borrowers.

A significant portion of economic activity occurs in the informal sector, where price signals and credit conditions are often difficult to observe. The growth in this sector may respond slowly to a rate cut, but the adverse effect of a rate hike would be more pronounced. The efforts to formalise the economy through the Goods and Services Tax (GST) architecture, Udyam registration, and digital payment structure, as well as gig registration, may gradually strengthen monetary policy transmission.

Between policy and impact

India's bank-dominated credit system means that changes in policy rates affect demand only if banks are willing and able to reprice loans. When lending standards tighten or banks adjust deposit rates slowly, reductions in rates may not be translated into proportionately lower borrowing costs for firms. In our research, we demonstrate that monetary transmission can sometimes be blunted by credit market segmentation. We find that the impact of the interest rate is asymmetric in India. While large firms are less responsive to rate hikes, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and households face credit constraints due to an effective lending-rate floor.

The last interest rate cut is consistent with our evidence. Equity markets and short-term debt traders were quick to respond to the RBI's previous rate cut, but it did not translate into uniform repricing across segments. The cautious lending behaviour, shaped by concerns over asset quality, capital constraints, and risk pricing, may have kept credit conditions tighter than policy signals alone would suggest. This can create a gap between the intended policy stance and the actual financial conditions faced by firms and households.

As a result, subdued credit growth may reflect impaired transmission rather than weak underlying demand, complicating the interpretation of credit and investment indicators. The recent NITI Aayog report, 'Deepening the Corporate Bond Market in India,' emphasises the need to deepen the corporate bond market to enhance monetary policy transmission. These structural challenges also influence how the RBI communicates its policy stance. The central bank chose a cautious and conditional language, but it affects the effectiveness of policy signals. In an economy with segmented credit markets and uneven monetary transmission, the RBI often needs to explain not only the direction of policy but also the channels by which policy is expected to operate.

The RBI's recent rate cut may be appropriate, given subdued inflation and India's potential for growth. But it also highlights a deeper challenge for monetary policy. India's inflation-targeting framework can be constrained by its often implicit commitment to a neoclassical stance rather than pragmatic reality. The December decision suggests the RBI responded to these constraints, recognising that the policy rate alone cannot shoulder the burden of stabilisation in an economy where supply shocks and segmented transmission matter.

The decision reflects adaptation to valid critiques about complexity and real-world frictions rather than mechanically following neoclassical prescriptions. Monetary policy must align its actions with the economy's institutional and structural realities, thereby supporting growth.

(Gourishankar teaches finance, and Neha is a doctoral scholar in finance, at IIT Kharagpur)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

When courage paddles

She would watch the videos with interest, but refuse to step into the water

LAKSHMI R SRINIVAS

Summers are warm and sunny in their city, and the lake-front is a halcyon place to be in. They take dips in the water, not going too far out, as their swimming legs are not seasoned yet. Their four-year-old tags along, but she does not like the water. No amount of cajoling or coaxing makes her go near the water, and they decided to do something about it. After all, children as young as six months old are taking to swimming like fish to water.

First, they increased bath days and put her in a full bathtub, but she protested so much that they stopped the training.

They then started showing her videos of her best friends frolicking in the water. She would watch the videos with interest and enthusiasm, reacting happily to the sight of her friends.

But she still refused to step into the water. There are umpteen videos of her walking confidently at the lake-front, but the minute she senses her folks are leading her to the water, she makes a dash to go as far away from the water as possible.

Next, they tried playdates at the waterfront with her friends. Her friends would run into the water and have to be coaxed or scolded to exit after the allotted time, while she would stand far away like an ice princess with her nose high in the air, as if to say she is the wisest of them all.

Her parents joked about how she took after her grandma, who did not dip a toe into the water, even while grandpa was scuba-diving in Havelock Island in the Andamans and walking on the sand dunes in the Bahamas. They said she seemed to be like a cat in her dislike of water.

One day, her parents decided they would have to use shock tactics on her, or she would never overcome her fear of the water. My son picked her up and carried her into the lake while my daughter-in-law recorded the event. After a few minutes, he gently put her down in the water.

Well, K took to swimming like a champion swimmer—kept her head up, paddled with all four limbs and made a beeline for the shore, reaching it in record time. She then scampered away. My son says that as she swam, she used her bushy tail well.

K had proved that, like all dogs, she could swim instinctively but continued to stay away from the water.

She wags her tail and looks up at us with those dark brown melting eyes, as if to say, "No, thank you!"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Make skill development a national mission

Apropos 'Workers without work: Why skills matter more than ever' (Jan 2), the article highlights the need for inclusion of skill development in our curriculum. Reports indicate that the employability of our educated youth is below industry needs. There is a huge gap between our education system and the needs of industry. The need of the hour is for every state and central university/institution to lay out a roadmap for skilling current students and prepare for future entrants. In earlier years, we had polytechnic institutions in each district which prepared youths for direct employment. For some reason, these gradually lost ground. Revival of such institutes, taking care of present and future needs of industry, is an urgent necessity. The state governments and the Centre should take skill development as a national mission.

N Ramesh, Bengaluru

Better FASTags

The recent decision to remove mandatory KYC compliance for FASTags is commendable. The move brings much-needed relief to vehicle owners who faced unnecessary inconvenience and confusion due to repeated verification procedures. By shifting the responsibility of vehicle verification to banks, authorities have ensured a smoother and more accountable system. This decision will improve user experience and strengthen trust in digital toll collection.

K R Gagan, Tumakuru

Ensure enforcement

This refers to 'Faridabad woman gang-raped in van, 2 held' (Jan 1). The incident in Faridabad involving sexual assault in a moving vehicle underscores continuing gaps in urban safety despite legal reforms over the past decade. Such crimes point to deficiencies in night-time policing, surveillance, and rapid response systems that are common across Indian cities, including Bengaluru. Addressing women's safety requires consistent enforcement, improved monitoring of vulnerable areas, and institutional accountability rather than reactive measures after crimes occur.

Umme Haani, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

We are contesting elections as part of the Mahayuti, but in some seats, we are contesting independently. To make sure that Mumbai's mayor is from the Mahayuti, in this election, we will stay in the alliance with the BJP, Shiv Sena, and NCP.

Ramdas Athawale, Union Minister and RPI(A) president

In politics, alliances are temporary, but interests are eternal.

Benjamin Disraeli

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

A restrained response to terror

NIA's Pahalgam chargesheet signals a shift from rhetorical assertions towards investigative rigour and credible evidence

ZULFIKAR MAJID

The terror attack in Pahalgam's Baisaran Valley on April 22, 2025, was an assault not only on innocent lives but on a shared Indian idea of normalcy. 26 civilians – 25 tourists and a local pony operator – were killed, many of them on what was meant to be an ordinary holiday in one of India's most visited hill destinations.

For families in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal or Kochi, the attack felt unsettling precisely because it erased the distance between conflict and everyday life. Eight months later, the Indian State's response has taken a form that rarely attracts public attention: a 1,597-page chargesheet filed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) before a special court in Jammu. It is not a dramatic gesture, nor an emotional one. But it is arguably the most consequential response India can offer to terrorism – one rooted in law, documentation and restraint.

The chargesheet represents an effort to confront terror not through loud assertion but through forensic clarity; to build a case that can endure legal scrutiny rather than momentary outrage.

The Pahalgam attack was planned and executed with military precision. Terrorists armed with M4 carbines and AK-47 rifles targeted unarmed civilians in a crowded tourist meadow. In the months that followed, security forces tracked those responsible, culminating in 'Operation Mahadev' in July 2025, when three Pakistani terrorists – Faisal Jatt alias Suleman Shah, Habeeb Tahir alias Jibran, and Hamza Afghani – were killed in the Dachigam forest on the outskirts of Srinagar.

What distinguishes this case is how the aftermath was handled. Rather than treating the encounter as closure, investigators treated it as evidence. Ballistic analysis linked weapons recovered in Dachigam to cartridges found at Pahalgam. This emphasis on scientific linkage reflects lessons learned from past cases, where prosecutions collapsed due to weak or circumstantial evidence.

India's counter-terror apparatus, often criticised for overreach or haste, appears to have opted here for method over momentum.

The chargesheet names seven accused, including Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and its proxy, The Resistance Front (TRF), as legal entities. TRF had initially claimed responsibility for the attack before retracting its statement, a familiar pattern in proxy militancy. By naming both organisations formally, the NIA has placed judicial accountability over political messaging.

This is an important distinction. India has long accused Pakistan-based groups of orchestrating attacks, but such claims often remained in the diplomatic domain, vulnerable to denial and counterclaims. By placing these allegations within a criminal prosecution, supported by digital records, communication trails and forensic evidence, the State is shifting the argument from geopolitics to jurisprudence.

The charges invoked, including those under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, UAPA, and the Arms Act, are designed for endurance. Convictions under these provisions demand proof beyond reasonable doubt, not rhetorical certainty.

Perhaps the most understated yet significant aspect of the case is its restraint. Despite operating in a region with a long history of insurgency, the investigation has charged only two local residents, accused of harbouring the terrorists. For years, India's Kashmir policy has been criticised, often fairly, for conflating militancy with the population. Broad detentions and sweeping operations weakened public trust and legal outcomes alike. The Pahalgam case suggests an institutional awareness that credibility flows from precision, not scale. This matters beyond Kashmir. For citizens across India, confidence in the State's counter-terror response depends not only on its strength, but on its fairness.

Evidence as strategy

The deeper message of the chargesheet is about how India now seeks to confront denial. For decades, terrorism in South Asia has existed in a grey zone of plausible deniability, where responsibility is hinted at but rarely established conclusively.

By assembling a dense evidentiary record, linking handlers, finances, communications and weapons, the NIA is attempting to close that grey zone. This is about ensuring that when India speaks of responsibility, it does so with material that can withstand not just international scepticism, but domestic judicial scrutiny.

The Pahalgam victims were not soldiers or officials; they were civilians from across India, travelling within their own country. That reality makes this case national, not regional. The chargesheet underscores a simple but vital point: security is not maintained only at borders or through force. It is maintained in courtrooms, through files that may be dull to read but decisive in outcome.

The Indian State's response to Pahalgam is not perfect, nor final. Trials will be long. Verdicts are uncertain. But by choosing to respond with evidence rather than impulse, and law rather than spectacle, India signals a confidence in its institutions. In an age of noise, that restraint may be its strongest statement.

Delhi should start a dialogue process with the new government that would take over in Kathmandu after the elections, irrespective of its political orientation

Elections in Nepal: Gen Z challenges old guard

RANJIT RAE

Since the fury of the Gen Z movement of September 8-9, 2025, which resulted in death and destruction, Nepal has been on a political roller coaster. The unpopular coalition government of the two largest parties, the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) or CPN (UML), headed by K P Sharma Oli as prime minister, was forced to resign. An interim government led by former chief justice Sushila Karki, comprising technocrats as ministers, was sworn in with the express purpose of organising elections within six months, that is, by March 5, 2026. The lower house of Parliament, the Pratinidhi Sabha, was subsequently dissolved.

Even as the new government set about organising the logistics and, more importantly, creating an enabling environment for free and fair elections, the old guard, largely responsible for the cartelization of Nepali politics, namely, Oli and NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba, who had temporarily stepped away from his responsibilities as party president, began to reassert themselves. Oli, following amendments to the CPN (UML) party constitution on age and term limits, won a resounding victory as chair of the party. With renewed vigour, he continued to disparage the Gen Z movement and belittle the interim government. He was joined by the NC in petitioning the Supreme Court to reinstate Parliament.

Gen Z, meanwhile, remained an amorphous and diffuse group, marked by diverse opinions and lacking clear leadership. The charismatic mayor of Kathmandu, Balendra Shah, who was the preferred nominee of Gen Z for the interim prime minister's post before Karki's name was agreed upon and who had been active during the uprising, appeared to retreat into the background. Many speculated that the movement had run its course and that traditional parties would once again assume the reins of power, either through elections or in the event of Parliament being reinstated by the Supreme Court.

RSP as Gen Z torchbearer

The release on bail of the popular leader of the relatively new Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP), Rabi Lamichhane, has injected fresh energy into the younger political forces. He has put together a triumvirate of charismatic leaders and high achievers, including Balendra Shah – credited with the clean-up and beautification of the capital – and Kulman Ghising, widely acknowledged for significantly improving Nepal's power situation. Shah has been declared the party's prime ministerial face. Effectively, the RSP has emerged as the torchbearer of the Gen Z movement and its ideals of good governance.

While the old leadership, particularly Oli, has been dismissive – he described the new grouping as an alliance of "chickens, goats, and foxes" that would "achieve nothing" – they are clearly shaken. Reports suggest that the NC and the CPN (UML) might engage in a friendly contest in the next elections or even forge an electoral alliance in order to jointly counter the potential challenge from the newer forces.

The prospect of elections is also spurring consolidation among other political groups. The Maoists have formed a Nepalese Communist Party along with several smaller splinter left groups. Having lost considerable grassroots support, it will be an uphill task for them to contest elections on their own. Prachanda, very much part of the old guard given the numerous coalition governments he has been part of, has nonetheless openly supported Rabi Lamichhane during his imprisonment as well as the Gen Z protestors. Madhesi parties are reorganising; some have merged, while others are attempting to align with the RSP. Pro-monarchy parties, too, are regrouping. New political alignments are clearly taking shape.

While popular sentiment appears to favour the younger trio of Balen–Lamichhane–Kulman, whether this sentiment will translate into votes for the RSP remains an open question. Though founded only in 2022, the RSP performed surprisingly well in that year's general elections, winning 20 seats with about 10% of the total vote and emerging as the fourth-largest party in Parliament. However, while it has a presence across Nepal, its support base is largely urban and concentrated in major cities and amongst the non-resident Nepali community overseas, which influences the voting behaviour of their families back home. It lacks charismatic leadership from the Terai region and cannot match the resources, cadres, or organisational depth of the traditional parties. Moreover, the election timeline is extremely tight, with polling just two months away. The party has also faced criticism for selecting well-placed individuals, rather than candidates from underprivileged backgrounds, under the proportional representation system for election to the Upper House. Despite these constraints, the RSP is expected to put up a strong challenge to the formidable old guard.

India watches closely

India is watching developments in Nepal closely. An unstable Nepal is not in India's interest. The sooner elections are held, and an elected government is installed, the better it would be for India–Nepal relations and for ongoing development cooperation initiatives. India has extended support to the interim government and remains committed to providing logistical assistance for the elections. Any weakening of the communist movement in Nepal, which has historically fuelled anti-India sentiment, would be viewed positively from India's perspective.

Going forward, India needs to make people-to-people engagement, especially with youth, a central theme of its neighbourhood-first policy. India should extend full support to Nepal for the reconstruction of the infrastructure damaged during the Gen Z movement. In any asymmetric relationship, such as that between India and Nepal, irritants will inevitably arise from time to time. These, however, should not be allowed to fester. Efforts should be made to initiate a dialogue process with the new government, irrespective of its political orientation, on issues such as revision of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the boundary dispute, and the recruitment of Nepalese Gorkhas into the Indian Army—a long-standing tradition that has been disrupted following India's adoption of the Agniveer scheme for short-term recruitment without post-retirement pensions.

(The writer, a retired diplomat, served as India's ambassador to Nepal. His latest book, Shared Bond, Strategic Interests: India–Nepal Relations in a Turbulent World, has been published recently.)

FROM PROTESTS TO POLLS

2025 Gen Z protests in Nepal

August–September: Growing dissatisfaction among youths over corruption, economic challenges, and restrictions on social media triggers street protests

September 8: Large-scale protests led by Gen Z youth erupt across the nation and turn violent, with agitators demanding accountability, an end to corruption, and a rollback of social media restrictions

September 9: Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli resigns

September 12:
- Sushila Karki, former chief justice of the Supreme Court, is appointed interim prime minister to lead a transitional government and restore stability
- Pratinidhi Sabha (House of Representatives), the lower house of Federal Parliament, is dissolved

March 5, 2026: **General elections are scheduled to elect all 275 members of the House of Representatives**
- 165 members of the Pratinidhi Sabha will be elected from single-member constituencies by first-past-the-post voting, and 110 will be elected through the proportional electoral system, with voters voting for political parties, considering the whole country as a single election constituency
- A majority requires 138 seats, making coalition governments highly likely, and post-poll negotiations will be crucial for the formation of the new government

KEY PLAYERS

Nepali Congress
- One of the largest parties with strong grassroots networks
- Infighting between factions led by the party president, **Sher Bahadur Deuba**, and general secretary, **Gagan Thapa**
- Vowed reform and youth outreach after Gen Z protests
- NC was part of the ruling coalition led by K P Sharma Oli of CPN-UML during the Gen Z protest, and may find it difficult to regain people's trust
- May opt for post-poll alliances with other parties.

Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist)
- **K P Sharma Oli**, who resigned as PM during Gen Z protest, has recently secured a third term as party chair
- The party terms the Gen-Z protests as an externally backed attempt to destabilise the politics of Nepal, stressing sovereignty and resistance to foreign influence
- CPN-UML is exploring issue-based alliances with smaller nationalist and left parties, while keeping channels open with former coalition partners
- Many blame Oli for the crackdown on Gen Z protesters

Nepali Communist Party
- The Nepali Communist Party (NCP) was formed through the merger of 10 left parties
- Former prime minister, **Pushpa Kamal Dahal a.k.a. Prachanda,** is the chief architect and public face of the new formation.
- He argues that elections are the only legitimate path out of Nepal's political crisis and has warned against deferring the polls
- The party is positioning itself for coalition bargaining and post-poll power-sharing negotiations

Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP)
- Founded in 2022 by journalist-turned-politician **Rabi Lamichhane**
- Appeals strongly to youth, urban voters, professionals
- Focus on governance reform, fighting corruption, creating jobs, better healthcare and education, and digital services
- Leveraging Gen Z discontent against traditional parties
- Projected **Balendra Shah,** a former rapper and currently the mayor of Kathmandu, as the prime ministerial candidate, and brought **Kulman Ghising,** the energy minister of the interim government, onboard

SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

Actions for a resilient planet

Some countries are sacrificing long-term interests for short-term gains, blocking progressive steps that aim for a better planet, writes K N Ninan

Mankind faces two stark choices: either pursue the current perilous path of unsustainable economic growth with severe financial and environmental costs, or change course and set a path of progress and prosperity with tremendous economic and ecological benefits.

The recently released Global Environment Outlook (GEO-7) report of the United Nations Environment Programme, prepared by about 300 scientists from 82 countries, reveals the costs of inaction and the benefits of action in tackling the global environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and land degradation.

The costs of inaction are immense and worsening. Without accelerated climate mitigation, global mean temperature rise is likely to exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in the early 2030s and 2.0°C by the 2040s, reducing annual global GDP by 4% by 2050 and by 20% by the end of the century. This, combined with biodiversity loss, will increase vulnerability to disasters and weather extremes and jeopardise human well-being and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Air pollution is responsible for approximately 6.7 million premature deaths globally each year, resulting in annual health costs of roughly 6.1% of global GDP, or $8.1 trillion in 2019 alone. Plastic pollution and mismanaged waste cause an estimated 0.4-1 million deaths every year. Global land degradation is estimated to cost more than 10% of global GDP due to the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The benefits of action far outweigh the costs of inaction. The GEO7 report indicates that investing in the global transformation of systems from energy to food can help avert 9 million premature deaths by 2050, many attributable to reduced air pollution, and lift 200 million people out of undernourishment and 150 million out of extreme poverty by 2050. Approximately 300 million people will have access to safe water sources by 2050. While this will entail up-front costs, the long-term returns on investment are tremendous.

Restoring 350 million hectares of degraded lands by 2030 is projected to yield ecosystem benefits valued at over $9 trillion with an investment of $1 trillion, and to remove an additional 13–26 gigatons of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from the atmosphere. The health co-benefits of reducing GHGs and air pollutants are estimated at $54 trillion compared with global costs of around $22 trillion.

The annual social and environmental costs of plastic pollution are projected to range from $300 billion to $600 billion. Shifting to a circular economy and relying on the 3R strategy – Reuse, Recycle, and Reorient – and diversification, as well as tackling the legacy of plastic pollution, could reduce plastic pollution by 80%, increase job opportunities, improve livelihoods and encourage innovation. In addition to reducing annual GHG emissions, it could yield $1.3 trillion in direct public and private cost savings over 2021–2040 and avoid $3.3 trillion in environmental and social costs associated with plastic pollution.

The overall macroeconomic annual benefits of transformation are estimated to begin around 2050, increase to approximately $20 trillion per year by 2070, and exceed $100 trillion per year by 2100, accounting for more than 25% of projected global GDP in 2100.

The GEO report calls for transformative changes across the food, energy, environment, materials/waste, and economic and financial systems. This involves shifting to sustainable and healthy diets, eating more plant-based foods, exploiting the potential of cultivated meat and other novel foods, reforming food production and marketing systems, conserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, sustainable land management practices, implementing nature-based solutions, and emphasising circularity in the production and consumption sectors to tackle waste and reduce pressure on mining of critical minerals. Transformation in the energy sector involves diversifying energy sources, increasing the use of renewable energy, phasing out fossil fuels, and improving energy access and security.

Apart from looking beyond the traditional GDP to gauge well-being by also tracking changes in human and natural capital, the report calls for economic and financial sector reforms by phasing out and repurposing environmentally harmful subsidies, estimated at $1.5 trillion per year from energy, food and mining as well as internalising environmental externalities into the prices of goods and services of about $45 trillion per year from the energy and food systems. This would help deliver an estimated $6-7 trillion per year of investment needed to reach global net zero GHG emissions by 2050 and bridge the estimated gap of $700 billion per year for implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Despite undergoing a rigorous review process by hundreds of expert reviewers and governments, the summary for policymakers (SPM) of the GEO report based on the latest scientific evidence was not approved at the UNEP's approval session due to opposition from a few member countries, who objected to references about phasing out of fossil fuels and the shift to a circular economy.

Although SPMs of IPCC, IPBES, and UN scientific reports are not policy-prescriptive or legally enforceable, they provide signals to governments on which policies or actions will yield beneficial economic and environmental outcomes. Regrettably, some countries are sacrificing long-term interests for short-term gains. As some authors rightly argued in a recent article in the *Nature Sustainability* journal: "Scientific evidence should not be the subject of political negotiation." The approval process for such reports requires review to prevent similar situations in the future.

(The writer is Lead Author, GEO-7, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi)

DID YOU KNOW?

Genomic study traces pigs' movement in Asia

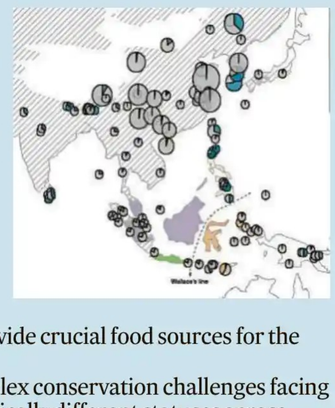
A new study published in *Science* reveals how thousands of years of human migration introduced invasive pig species throughout the Asia-Pacific region, fundamentally altering island ecosystems.

Led by Professor Laurent Frantz of Queen Mary University of London and Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, along with David Stanton from Cardiff University and Greger Larson from Oxford University, the research analysed genomes from over 700 pigs, including archaeological specimens, to track their movement across Southeast Asia.

Pigs present a unique case in the region. While the "Wallace Line" — a major biogeographic boundary identified by the evolutionary biologist Alfred Russel Wallace —typically prevents wildlife from crossing between the Asian and Australasian sides, pigs occur on both sides and extend from Southeast Asia to remote Polynesia.

The study found that different cultures have transported pigs across the region for millennia. The earliest evidence dates to around 50,000 years ago, when people in Sulawesi — known as the earliest cave painters — both depicted and moved warty pig species as far as Timor, possibly to establish hunting grounds.

Pig introductions dramatically accelerated around 4,000 years ago when early agricultural communities began transporting domestic pigs from Taiwan across the Philippines, northern Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and eventually to Vanuatu and remote Polynesia. European colonisation later introduced additional pig populations.



Many domestic pigs escaped and became feral. On the Komodo Islands, they hybridised with ancient warty pigs from Sulawesi, creating populations that now provide crucial food sources for the endangered Komodo dragon.

The findings highlight the complex conservation challenges facing the Pacific today. Pigs hold dramatically different statuses across islands — some are considered spiritual beings, others pests. At the same time, some have become so integrated into local ecosystems that they might almost be regarded as native.

Professor Frantz noted the research raises fundamental questions: "At what point do we consider something native? What if people introduced species tens of thousands of years ago? Are these worth conservation efforts?"

Dr Stanton emphasised the complexity of tracing these movements: "This research reveals what happens when people transport animals enormous distances, across one of the world's most fundamental natural boundaries."

The study, involving over 50 collaborators worldwide, demonstrates that effective conservation policy must navigate these complexities and move beyond simply protecting native fauna, acknowledging the long history of human influence on Pacific ecosystems.

- Phys.org

Financial dominance over wife does not amount to cruelty: Apex court

Quashes dowry harassment case filed by woman against estranged husband

NEW DELHI, PTI

Financial dominance of a husband over his estranged wife in a soured marital relationship is not an act of cruelty, the Supreme Court has said while highlighting that a criminal litigation cannot become a "gateway to settle scores and pursue personal vendettas".

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and R Mahadevan made the observation while quashing a criminal case lodged against an estranged husband by his wife, alleging cruelty and dowry harassment.

Setting aside a Telangana High Court verdict that had refused to quash the FIR, Justice Nagarathna said, "The monetary and financial dominance of the accused-appellant, as alleged by the complainant-respondent No2, cannot qualify as an instance of cruelty, especially in the absence of any tangible mental or physical harm caused."

JUSTICE NAGARATHNA
SC judge

"The said situation is a mirror reflection of the Indian society, where men of the households often try to dominate and take charge of the finances of the women, but criminal litigation cannot become a gateway or a tool to settle scores and pursue personal vendettas

Justice Nagarathna, who authored the judgment on behalf of the bench, refused to consider the act of seeking details of expenses of the money sent by the estranged husband as an act of cruelty.

"Courts have to be extremely careful and cautious in dealing with complaints and must take pragmatic realities into consideration while dealing with matrimonial cases, where the allegations have to be scrutinised with greater care and circumspection in order to prevent miscarriage of justice and abuse of process of law," the bench observed.

The court termed the discord over the expenses as a reflection of "the daily wear and tear of marriage" and held that such actions cannot be categorised as cruelty under section 498 (subjecting a married woman to cruelty by her husband or his relatives) of the Indian Penal Code.

"In fact, we find that the allegations of cruelty, mental harassment and voluntarily causing hurt against the accused-appellant herein have been made with a mala-fide intent with vague and general allegations," the court said in its December 19 order.

Separatist leader Mirwaiz warns of deepening crisis in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, DHNS: Despite the abrogation of Article 370 and the downgrading of Jammu and Kashmir to a Union Territory in 2019, the Kashmir conflict "continues to keep the region in an unsettled state that can erupt anytime," senior separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said on Friday, warning of a deepening crisis in the Valley.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq

In a hard-hitting social media statement, Mirwaiz, who is also Kashmir's chief cleric, reflected on 2025 as "a year marked by tragedy and uncertainty." He cited the horrific Pahalgam attack, which left people in fear as homes were demolished, followed by another India–Pakistan conflict that highlighted the fragility of peace in the region.

The year concluded with the massive blast in New Delhi, which further deepened anxiety for Kashmiris already living under suspicion and punitive measures in parts of India, he said. "Beyond these incidents, not much has changed for Kashmiris," Mirwaiz said.

He lamented the widening trust deficit with New Delhi, noting that enforced silence is projected as acquiescence, wounds remain unhealed, and the elected government of the Union Territory continues to operate under constraints.

After 100-day stir, Centre forms panel on Tezpur varsity crisis

SUMIR KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI, DHNS

After a peaceful agitation for over 100 days by the students and the staff demanding the removal of the Vice-Chancellor of Tezpur University in Assam, the Union Ministry of Education has constituted an enquiry committee, asking the VC to go on leave till completion of the probe.

The Ministry also appointed Amarendra Kumar Das, a professor of design at IIT Guwahati, as the pro-VC of the University.

The agitators have been demanding the removal of the VC, Sambhu Nath Singh, for his alleged mismanagement, corruption and absence for a long time. The situation turned worse on November 29, when the agitators shut down the university as their demand for a probe against Singh remained unattended. This disrupted normal activities, including classes and examinations.

As the students took up the hunger strike and continued protests on the campus, braving the severe cold weather conditions, the Union Ministry of Education on Thursday set up a three-member enquiry committee headed by N Lokendra Singh, the Vice-Chancellor of Manipur University. Jagadish Kumar Patnaik, VC of Nagaland University and Manish R Joshi, secretary of the UGC, are the two other members of the committee.

The team will submit its report in a maximum of three months.

Members of Tezpur University Teachers' Association, Tezpur University Non-Teaching Employees' Association, and the students, however, met on Thursday night and decided not to completely withdraw the agitation till the findings of the enquiry turn in favour of the university's stakeholders. The movement will not be withdrawn in its entirety until the findings of the Enquiry Committee conclusively uphold justice and until the outcomes turn in favour of the stakeholders, said a statement issued.

Viral video shows UP cop 'scanning' man to 'ascertain' citizenship

LUCKNOW, DHNS: Can a person's citizenship be ascertained through scanning his body with a cell phone? At least the UP police think so.

Amid the ongoing campaign across Uttar Pradesh to identify illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, police in Ghaziabad town were reportedly using cell phones to scan the suspected immigrants to ascertain their citizenship.

A video that went viral on social media purportedly showed a cop putting a cell phone on the back of a person and telling him that, according to the machine, he was a Bangladeshi citizen. Interestingly, the video showed him holding a cell phone in his hands and no other instrument.

According to reports, the incident happened a few days ago while the police were conducting checks in the slums in the Bhowapur and Bihari Market areas in the town. The policeman, who put the cell phone on the back of the person, was identified as station house officer (SHO) Ajai Sharma. A few RAF and CRPF constables are also seen in the video. The cop reportedly told the man that he had a machine that could reveal if he was telling the truth.

As the video went viral, many people took to the internet asking how the citizenship of a person could be ascertained through a machine.

Finding themselves under the scanner after the viral video, the police clarified that it was merely a way to trick the suspected illegal immigrants into revealing their true identity. "The suspected immigrants often tell lies to hide their identity, so the police at times use such tricks... In reality, there is no such device or machine that can ascertain citizenship," said a police official.

MISCELLANY

◆COMICS◆

Blondie

HONEY, WAKE UP! I WAS JUST HAVING THE WEIRDEST DREAM!!
WHAT WAS IT ABOUT?
I DREAMED YOU WERE RIGHT AND I WAS WRONG ABOUT OUR ARGUMENT EARLIER!
WOW! THAT WAS A WEIRD DREAM!
I KNOW!

Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

Peanuts

Marvin

I HAVE TO CALL MY PARENTS "MOM" AND "DAD"
I LOST MY COUP ATTEMPT TO BE THE RULER OF THE FAMILY!
...AND I'VE BEEN DETHRONED AND GIVEN A TIMEOUT IN THE DUNGEON

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

PREIG

PNITU

NCIORI

NAMHEU

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: RANCH MOUND WITHIN HUDDLE
Answer: The rooster wondered why he woke up so early, but then it — DAWNED ON HIM

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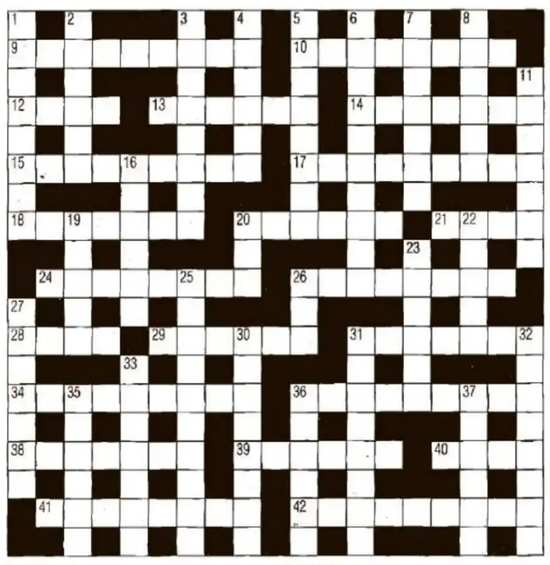
CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 4021



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
9 One's utmost to equalise with the champion (5,4)
10 He's calling the dog McNeill (8)
12 Bag you find in the tool box (4)
13 Moisten everything, in case (6)
14 The dog, Harold, is carrying a ball (7)
15 Pauses at "Is back among these convinced" (9)
17 Males, I agree, can be a lot of beasts (9)
18 Got Pip, the dog, to go inside (7)
20 Start to boo the act now playing? (4,2)
21 File the brief communication (4)
24 Not watered down – honest! (8)
26 Shot when away taking a holiday (3-5)
28 Making a movement of fear, pale (4)
29 The question did somehow figure in again (6)
31 A crushing remark you consign to paper (3-4)
34 A star, for instance, gets the best part (9)
36 The only lightweight hat left? This is too much! (4,5)
38 Track not kept in a good state of repair (3,4)
39 Dismisses as "Just platforms for politicians" (6)
40 Drawing of a tree that's unfinished (4)
41 See, behaving oddly on the plane trip, a foreigner (8)
42 Medication for the heart is not to be compounded in it (9)

DOWN
1 Is riveting in the love scenes (8)
2 Keeps away from the chasm, while about it (6)
3 Left late (8)
4 Stops where there are goods on display for sale (6)
5 A cheat on more than one occasion? (3-5)
6 It's great to get away with overcharging! (7,3)
7 Tough and mean right through (7)
8 Less inclined to run with the dog (6)
11 Told to redo, changing the colour (7)
16 About that mask – it's frightening (6)
19 Bag clasp (5)
20 Also raised the child (3)
22 I had backed "The Love State" (5)
23 Free the deserter the soldiers captured (6)
25 Assuming as a name when one's business is collapsing (5,5)
26 United came out on top, you say (3)
27 Looked up "Lady's Rings" (7)
30 Couldn't stand trial when caught in the act (8)
31 For Greg Norman's son, golf is the open sesame (8)
32 Drown one out, as you'd expect (2,6)
33 Didn't stand one's ground either and got nowhere (4,3)
35 Look – just back the ruddy horse! (6)
36 Taking a meal round in the boat (6)
37 Hurry up! It's needed to correct a figure (4-2)

ACROSS
9 Ridiculous (9)
10 Besides (8)
12 Liquid measure (4)
13 Yearbook (6)
14 Tomato sauce (7)
15 Abhorrent (9)
17 Storage places (9)
18 Gift (7)
20 Slovenly (6)
21 Invoice (4)
24 Thin soup (8)
26 Jumper (8)
28 Resonation (4)
29 Response (6)
31 Mawkish (7)
34 Train's restaurant coach (6,3)
36 Global (9)
38 Nonprofessional (7)
39 Author (6)
40 Wicked (4)
41 Aberrant (8)
42 Regards (9)

DOWN
1 Nonsense, informally (8)
2 Vegetable (6)
3 Plentiful (8)
4 Outcome (6)
5 Inferred (8)
6 Car part (5,5)
7 Card game (7)
8 Fasten (6)
11 Disciple (7)
16 Oil (6)
19 Long period of time (5)
20 Employ (3)
22 Perfect (5)
23 Plump (6)
25 Black-and-white (10)
26 Standard (3)
27 Progress (7)
30 Lycanthrope (8)
31 Killer (8)
32 Unnecessary (8)
33 Surround (7)
35 Close at hand (6)
36 Moan (6)
37 Create (6)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 12323

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 1, S-too-D 6, P-ouch 9, Ve-nis-on 10, Green 11, Score 12, Ta-St.-e 13, Big Deal 15, We-t 17, Oslo 18, F-ami-ly 19, Plain 20, Grac-I-e 22, Fade 24, Ham 25, Bananas 26, S-p-oil 27, Steel 28, Aitch 29, Netb-all 30, Cents 31, L-earn
DOWN: 2, Tar-diS 3, Over-do 4, DeN (rev) 5, V-it-al 6, Post-man 7, Once 8, Ca-R-mel 12, Table 13, Bough (bow) 14, Gleam 15, Wi-ga-n 16, Types 18, Final 19, Pi-MP-les 21, Rattle 22, Fac-I-L-e 23, Dancer 25, Bimbo 26, Sent 28, All

EASY
ACROSS: 1, Crisp 6, Photo 9, Capture 10, Mural 11, Order 12, Slave 13, Several 15, Ova 17, Used 18, Adages 19, Truce 20, Assure 22, Peri 24, Roe 25, Coarser 26, River 27, Divan 28, Pivot 29, Replies 30, Amber 31, Rebel
DOWN: 2, Rouses 3, Scared 4, Pal 5, Stall 6, Provide 7, Here 8, Twelve 12, Sabre 13, Sugar 14, Verse 15, Ogles 16, Astir 18, Actor 19, Trainer 21, Sodium 22, Praise 23, Remove 25, Cello 26, Rare 28, Per

◆SU-DO-KU-6794◆

			4	3	7			
	2				9	7		5
8		3						
2					6	1		
	8						5	
		1	9					7
						9		8
3		4	8				7	
			7	2	5			

hard

SOLUTION TO 6793

4	1	8	9	7	5	2	3	6
6	3	7	4	2	1	9	8	5
5	9	2	3	6	8	4	1	7
1	2	9	6	8	7	3	5	4
8	7	4	5	1	3	6	9	2
3	6	5	2	9	4	8	7	1
7	8	6	1	3	2	5	4	9
9	5	3	7	4	6	1	2	8
2	4	1	8	5	9	7	6	3

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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T1	L1	S1	J8	R1	E1	O1	RACK 1
A1	A1	S1	M3	T1	A1	H4	Triple Word Score — RACK 2
R1	T1	U1	U1	Y4	G2	O1	Double Word Score — RACK 3
T1	T1	E1	U1	U1	R1	S1	RACK 4

PAR SCORE 115-125
by JUDD
FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

C3 U1 R1 T1 A1 I1 N1	RACK 1 =	62
R1 A1 D2 I1 A1 L1 S1	RACK 2 =	58
B3 L1 O1 W4 O1 U1 T1	RACK 3 =	86
A1 V4 I1 A1 T1 E1 S1	RACK 4 =	60
PAR SCORE 175-185	JUDD'S TOTAL	266

HITORI-3248

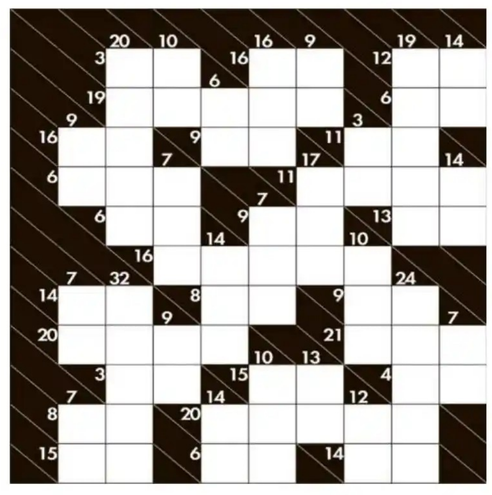
8	8	4	6	5	1	1	6
2	3	8	5	7	4	6	6
7	4	6	4	2	3	5	4
5	7	4	8	4	4	3	4
4	4	3	5	8	5	2	1
3	2	7	4	4	2	1	5
6	8	5	4	3	8	7	2
3	5	2	6	1	7	8	4

SOLUTION TO 3247

■	4	■	8	6	■	7	3
3	5	8	■	7	6	1	■
■	1	6	5	4	2	8	7
2	■	5	4	■	3	■	8
4	3	■	1	5	7	6	■
■	7	4	6	■	8	2	1
7	8	3	■	2	■	4	6
■	6	■	7	3	4	5	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3248



SOLUTION TO 3247

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3785

5		6	9					■
3	■		5		2		■	
7		■		3		6		4
			■		■	4		9
				■				
			■		■	5		
	9	7	8			■		
	■			5			1	
2			3		6			■

SOLUTION TO 3784

4	7	3	5	8	9	2	1	6
6	2	8	3	4	1	7	5	9
5	1	9	6	2	7	3	4	8
7	4	6	8	3	2	1	9	5
1	8	5	9	7	6	4	2	3
9	3	2	4	1	5	8	6	7
3	5	1	7	9	4	6	8	2
2	9	7	1	6	8	5	3	4
8	6	4	2	5	3	9	7	1

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

Man beaten up over B'deshi suspicion in Bihar

MADHUBANI, PTI: A man was allegedly beaten up in Bihar's Madhubani district after being wrongly suspected of being a Bangladeshi national, police said on Friday.

Police swung into action after a video of the incident went viral on social media, showing a person being beaten up by two youths who presumed him to be an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant.

Madhubani SP Yogendra Kumar said, "The social media cell of the police immediately investigated the matter and found that the incident took place in Chakda."

"The two individuals who were seen assaulting the victim have been identified as residents of Rajnagar. The victim, who works as a mason, is a resident of Birpur in Supaul district," he said.

A case has been lodged, he added. "Raids are being conducted to arrest both individuals," he said.

Centre warns X over Grok's misuse for 'obscene' content

Asks it to remove and disable 'nude, indecent, sexually explicit content'

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

After outrage over the misuse of its artificial intelligence tool Grok, the Centre on Friday issued a notice to X Corp (formerly Twitter) and asked it to remove and disable "obscene, nude, indecent, and sexually explicit content" from the platform.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has issued the notice stating that the company failed to comply with statutory due diligence obligations under the Information Technology Act 2000 and the IT Rules 2021.

The government ordered X Corp to send an action taken report within 72 hours detailing the measures adopted, the role of the chief compliance officer, and compliance with mandatory reporting under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.

The government's action followed a complaint by Shiv Sena (UBT) Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi, who wrote to Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw seeking urgent intervention to stop misuse of Grok.

The ministry, in its notice, expressed serious concerns over the misuse of Grok to generate and circulate obscene, sexually explicit, and derogatory content, particularly targeting women and children.

The ministry highlighted that users have exploited Grok's AI capabilities to generate synthetic images and videos in a derogatory manner, violating privacy and dignity.

MeitY warned that such acts normalise sexual harassment and undermine legal safeguards.

Terming misuse as a grave violation of dignity, privacy, and digital safety, the government warned that the microblogging site would face strict action if it failed to take corrective steps immediately.

The ministry also warned that continued non-compliance could result in the loss of safe harbour protections under the IT Act and invite action under multiple cyber, criminal, and child protection laws.

Safeguard lapses: Grok

Elon Musk's xAI artificial intelligence chatbot Grok said on Friday lapses in safeguards had resulted in 'images depicting minors in minimal clothing' on social media platform X and that improvements were being made to prevent this, reports Reuters. "There are isolated cases where users prompted for and received AI images depicting minors in minimal clothing," Grok said in a post on X. "xAI has safeguards, but improvements are ongoing to block such requests entirely."

"As noted, we've identified lapses in safeguards and are urgently fixing them — CSAM is illegal and prohibited," Grok said, referring to Child Sexual Abuse Material.

Saudi Arabia reveals new medicine rules for travellers

Gulf country sets up electronic service platform for permissions

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

People travelling to Saudi Arabia will have to take prior permission for the clearance of medicines intended for personal use, and an electronic service platform has been set up for applying for permission.

Indian travellers are advised to verify the permissibility of medicines they intend to carry, and obtain requisite approvals, wherever applicable, said the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Friday.

It said the India Country Office of Saudi Arabia's General Directorate of Narcotics Control (GDNC) has formally communicated to the NCB regarding the launch of an electronic service platform by Saudi Arabia.

The Gulf country has introduced the electronic service platform for obtaining prior permission for the clearance of medicines intended for personal use by individuals "entering or leaving" the country.

The platform, https://cds.sfda.gov.sa, has been established for the submission of applications and related details to obtain permission for clearance of medicines intended for personal use.

The NCB said it has been informed that certain medicines that are legally available in India or other countries may be prohibited or subject to restrictions in Saudi Arabia.

"It has also been informed that carrying medicines over prescribed limits may also attract regulatory action. As per the advisory, applications for permission are required to be submitted by the concerned individuals or their authorised representatives through the platform," it said.

Travellers have also been advised to consult the official list of restricted and prohibited medicines issued by the Saudi authorities prior to undertaking travel.

PILL ORDER

- Indian travellers are advised to verify permissibility of medicines to carry into Saudi Arabia
- They have to also obtain requisite approvals, wherever applicable, before travel
- Certain medicines legally available in India or other countries may be prohibited or restricted in Saudi Arabia

Had 6th sense on marriage: SC quashes rape conviction

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court came to the rescue of a man, convicted of rape on false promise of marriage and sentenced to 10 years' in jail, after having a "sixth sense" that the accused and the victim could be brought together by marriage.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma invoked its powers under Article 142, quashing the complaint as well as the conviction and sentence passed against appellant, Sandeep Singh Thakur.

"This is one of those rare cases where the intervention of this court, the appellant herein, who had applied to seek suspension of his sentence, was ultimately benefited by quashing of his conviction as well as the sentence," the bench said.

When the matter came up before the apex court challenging the rejection of suspension of sentence by the Madhya Pradesh High Court, the bench said, "We had a sixth sense that the appellant and the respondent prosecutrix could be brought together once again if they decided to marry each other."

Dealing with the appellant's plea against rejection of his suspension of sentence, the court interacted with him and the victim in the presence of their parents.

"Upon hearing them, we were informed that they were willing to marry each other. Hence, we granted interim bail to the appellant herein. The marriage took place on July 22, and the parties have been residing together since then. Their parents are happy with this," said the bench in a judgment last month.

As per the prosecution, the appellant met the girl in 2015, and they developed a liking for each other.

Thereafter, they entered into a consensual physical relationship. The girl claimed she acted on the appellant's alleged false promise of marriage. She got an FIR lodged against the appellant on November 2, 2021.

Subsequently, he was held guilty and sentenced to 10 years jail, Rs 50,000 fine and two years imprisonment with Rs 5,000 fine for both the offences respectively.

SUPREME COURT

"This is one of those rare cases where the intervention of this court, the appellant herein, who had applied to seek suspension of his sentence, was ultimately benefited by quashing of his conviction as well as sentence

Civic polls: Maha Yuti bags 68 seats unopposed

MUMBAI, PTI: The BJP and its Maha Yuti allies have won 68 seats unopposed in the Maharashtra civic polls, voting for which will be held on January 15.

Across the state, as many as 68 candidates from the BJP and the Maha Yuti have been elected unopposed, reflecting the party's growing strength in urban local bodies, BJP leader Keshav Upadhye said on Friday.

This includes 44 of the BJP, with the highest number being from Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation in Thane district.

COLD COMFORT

A man feeds a seagull at Anasagar Lake on a cold winter morning, in Ajmer, Rajasthan, on Friday. PTI

Cong to contest 100 seats in Assam

GUWAHATI, DHNS: Congress in Assam wants to put up candidates in 100 constituencies and support the allies in the remaining 26 in the Assembly polls slated for March-April.

The party's Assam unit president, Gaurav Gogoi, said that discussions on seat-sharing arrangements have begun with the allies, Raijor Dal, Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP), Left parties, and others.

The Congress and seven other Opposition parties, barring the Badruddin Ajmal-led AIUDF, in November decided to form an alliance and contest the polls with a target to unseat the BJP and its allies.

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಕೇಂದ್ರ ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ
ಅಪರ ಮುಖ್ಯ ನಗರ ಯೋಜಕರು, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಕೇಂದ್ರ ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ, 4ನೇ ಮಹಡಿ, ಅನೆಕ್ಸ್–3 ಕಟ್ಟಡ, ಎನ್.ಆರ್. ವೃತ್ತ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು–02.

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: JDTP(C)/PR/69/2025-26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 02.01.2026

ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

ಅರ್ಜಿದಾರರಾದ Arch Bishop of Bangalore Marappa Garden, Ramaswamy Palya ಇವರು ಕೆ.ಜಿ. ಬ್ಯಾಡರಹಳ್ಳಿ ಗ್ರಾಮದ ಸರ್ವೆ ನಂ.67/2 ರಲ್ಲಿ 01 ಎಕರೆ–03 ಗುಂಟೆ ವಿಸ್ತೀರ್ಣದ ಜಮೀನನ್ನು ಚರ್ಚ್ ಕಟ್ಟಡ ಉದ್ದೇಶಕ್ಕೆ ನಕ್ಷೆ ಮಂಜೂರಾತಿ ಕೋರಿರುತ್ತಾರೆ. ಈ ಪ್ರಸ್ತಾವನೆ ಕುರಿತು ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕರಿಂದ ಸಲಹೆ/ಅಕ್ಷೇಪಣೆಗಳೇನಾದರೂ ಇದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ, ಈ ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕದಿಂದ **15 ದಿನಗಳ ಒಳಗಾಗಿ** ಅಪರ ಮುಖ್ಯ ನಗರ ಯೋಜಕರು, ನಗರ ಯೋಜನೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಕೇಂದ್ರ ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ ನಂ. 4ನೇ ಮಹಡಿ, ಅನೆಕ್ಸ್–3 ಕಟ್ಟಡ ಎನ್.ಆರ್. ವೃತ್ತ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು 560 002. ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ ಇವರಿಗೆ ಲಿಖಿತ ರೂಪದಲ್ಲಿ ಅಂಚೆ ಮೂಲಕ ಅಥವಾ ಖುದ್ದಾಗಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ತಿಳಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ನಿಗದಿತ ಅವಧಿಯ ನಂತರ ಬರುವ ಯಾವುದೇ ಆಕ್ಷೇಪಣೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಲಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲ.

ಸಹಿ/– ಜಂಟಿ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು, ಬೆಂಕೇನಪಾ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು.

BENGALURU NORTH CITY CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer (QA/QC), Zone-2, Room No. 315, 3rd Floor, Mini Vidhana Soudha, Yelahanka, Bengaluru – 560 064

No.: EE/QA/QC/Z-2/BNCC/TEND/02/25-26 Date: 02.01.2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Two Cover System) (Only through KPP Portal)

The Executive Engineer QA/QC, Zone-2, The Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC), Quality Assurance / Quality Control division, Zone-2 invites Request for Proposal from interested persons / firms those **who have done similar type of work for Consultancy Services for Project Management including Supervision, Quality control (PMC) for** the below works.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
1	Providing PMC Services including Supervision & Quality control for Comprehensive Development and Improvements of Roads and Drains in Anjan Murthy Circle to MLA Layout, AECS Layout, KGE Layout, Maruthi Layout, HIG Colony and Muneshwara Temple, Railway Colony, Lottegolahalli, Basaveshwara Layout, Geddalahalli and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 61. Radhakrishna Temple, Ashwatha Nagar, Basaveshwara Layout, Bhoopsandra, Postal Colony, Nagshettyhalli, KEB Layout and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 62, Sanjaynagar, 4th, 5th Main SBM Layout Anand Nagar, Traffic Police Station to UAS Layout, Chowdiah Block, SSA Service upto Seethappa Layout, Vinayaka Layout, S S A Cross Roads and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 63, Hebbal and M.R. Garden, Patel Muniyappa Layout, Gangamma Layout, Kanakanagar and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 64, Vishwanath Nagenahalli (Ward No. 61, 62, 63 & 64, 4 Works, Package No.-01). **Project Cost (Rs. in Lakhs):** 1900.00, **EMD amount in Rs.:** 40,000.00.
2	Providing PMC Services including Supervision & Quality control for Comprehensive Development and Improvements of Roads and Drains in Arallappa Layout, Guddadahalli, Bhuvaneshwari Nagar and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 64, Vishwanath Nagenahalli, Sunrise Colony, Seethappa Layout, Bhuvaneshwari Nagar, Nanjamma Layout, Hanuman Layout, Sanaulla Layout and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 65, Manorayanapalya, HMT Layout, Beerappa Block, Dinnur and Surrounding areas, Ex- Servicemen Colony, Kousar Nagar, Seethappa Layout, Bhuvaneshwari Nagar and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 66, Chamundinagar (Ward No. 64, 65 & 66 Package No.-02). **Project Cost (Rs. in Lakhs):** 1600.00, **EMD amount in Rs.:** 34,000.00.
3	Providing PMC Services including Supervision & Quality control for Comprehensive Development and Improvements of Roads and Drains in Ganganagar Extension, Mutthappa Block, Pappanna Block, HMT Layout Phase - 1 and Surrounding areas, Vasanathappa Block, Giddappa Block, HMT Layout Phase - 2 and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 67, Ganganagar, 14th, 6th Cross 1st Block RT Nagar, 6th Main Road, 15th,16th and 17th Cross Road 2nd Block RT Nagar, Dinnur, Ajappa Block and Surrounding areas, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th Cross Roads Matadahalli and Mariyappa Block, Lingappa Block and Surrounding areas in Ward No. 68, JC Nagar (Ward No. 67 & 68 Package No.-03). **Project Cost (Rs. in Lakhs):** 1500.00, **EMD amount in Rs.:** 31,500.00.
4	Providing PMC Services including Supervision & Quality control for Improvements to Drains, Footpath and Resurfacing of Roads and Connecting Roads of Ward 61 - Radhakrishna Temple Ward and Ward No. 62 Sanjaynagaar, in Hebbal Assembly Constituency, Bengaluru North City Corporation, under CMIDP Scheme 2025-26 (Package-01). **Project Cost (Rs. in Lakhs):** 1000.00, **EMD amount in Rs.:** 21,000.00.
5	Providing PMC Services including Supervision & Quality control for Improvements to Drains, Footpath and Resurfacing of Roads and Connecting Roads of Ward 63-Hebbala and 65 Manorayanapalya in Hebbal Assembly Constituency, Bengaluru North City Corporation, under CMIDP Scheme 2025-26 (Package-02). **Project Cost (Rs. in Lakhs):** 1000.00, **EMD amount in Rs.:** 21,000.00.
6	Providing PMC Services including Supervision & Quality control for Improvements to Drains, Footpath and Resurfacing of Roads and Connecting Roads of Ward 64 - Vishwanatha Nagenahalli, in Hebbal Assembly Constituency, Bengaluru North City Corporation, under CMIDP Scheme 2025-26 (Package-03). **Project Cost (Rs. in Lakhs):** 1000.00, **EMD amount in Rs.:** 21,000.00.
7	Providing PMC Services including Supervision & Quality control for Improvements to Drains, Footpath and Resurfacing of Roads and Connecting Roads of Ward 66-Chamundinagar and 67 Ganaganagara, in Hebbal Assembly Constituency, Bengaluru North City Corporation, under CMIDP Scheme 2025- 26 (Package-04). **Project Cost (Rs. in Lakhs):** 1200.00, **EMD amount in Rs.:** 25,500.00.
8	Providing PMC Services including Supervision & Quality control for Improvements to Drains, Footpath and Resurfacing of Roads and Connecting Roads of Ward 68- JC Nagar, in Hebbal Assembly Constituency, Bengaluru North City Corporation, under CMIDP Scheme 2025-26 (Package-05). **Project Cost (Rs. in Lakhs):** 800.00, **EMD amount in Rs.:** 17,000.00.

Calendar of Events: (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the Government of Karnataka KPP portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** from **06.01.2026** at **4:00 p.m. (2)** Pre-Tender Meeting: **12.01.2026** at **11:30 a.m.** in the office of the Executive Engineer (QA/QC), Zone-2, Room No. 315, 3rd Floor, Mini Vidhana Soudha, Yelahanka, Bengaluru – 560 064. **(3)** Last date and time for receipt of tenders: **16.01.2026** upto **4:00 p.m. (4)** Opening of Technical bid: **17.01.2026** at **4:30 p.m.** Further details may be obtained from the above office, during office hours or website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**.

Sd/- Executive Engineer (QA/QC), Zone-2, BNCC

KARNATAKA HOUSING BOARD

3rd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560 009.

Tender Notification (Though KPP Portal)

Karnataka Housing Board invite tender through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal for Appointment of Project Management Consultant (PMC) for the work of **Construction of Governement First Grade Womens College phase-2 at Kolar District for the year 2025-26**

Notification No. KHB/CE/PMC/GFGC/KHB/2025-26/SE0331 Date: 31.12.2025

Last date for submission of bid: 15.01.2026 up to 4 PM

For further information contact below mentioned office address: Executive Engineer, Karnataka Housing Board, Cauvery Bhavan, Bengaluru. Tel: 080-22273511. Website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Karnataka Housing Board, Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/4787/AKAR/2025-26

SRI BANASHANKARI TEMPLE

Hindu Religious Institutions & Charitable Endowments Department

S. Kariyappa Road, Banashankari, Bangalore - 70. Ph : 080-2671 4989. E-mail: sribanashankaritemple@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

On **03.01.2026,** a large number of public is expected to visit **Sri Banashankari Ammanavara Brahma Rathotsava** Temple at Kanakapura Main Road under Kumaraswamy Layout Traffic Police Station During this time, the following traffic changes will be made for the benefit of pedestrians and motorists.

Road Blocked For Vehicular Traffic: Kanakapura Main Road from Banashankari Temple to Sarakki Market Junction.

Alternative routes for blocked traffic: 1. Vehicles going from Konanakunte side of Kanakapura main road towards Banashankari bus stand can take right turn near JP Nagar Metro Junction (Sarakki signal) and take Rajalakshmi route through Sindhur circle and take necessary routes or take right turn near Sarakki market junction and take left turn near Indira Gandhi circle to R.V. Aster can travel on necessary routes. **2.** Vehicles traveling from Banashankari Bus Stand towards Sarakki signal take a right turn near Banashankari Bus Stand and proceed through Yarab Nagar to K.S. Take a left turn at the layout junction and reach the Iliyasanagar-Sarakki signal and take necessary routes.

Public and motorists are requested to cooperate.

Sd/- Executive Officer
Sri Banashankari Temple, Bangalore.

BEFORE THE HON'BLE KARNATAKA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION, #16C-1, MILLER TANK BED AREA, VASANTHANAGAR, BENGALURU - 560 052.

IN THE MATTER OF:

Application under Section 62 and 64 of The Electricity Act, 2003 read with KERC (Multi Year Transmission, Distribution and Retail Supply Tariff) Regulations, 2024 for approval of Annual Performance Review (APR) for FY 2024-25.

Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (KPTCL)
Kaveri Bhavan, Bengaluru-560 009 ..... **Applicant**

NOTIFICATION of APR FOR FY-25

1.0 In accordance with KERC (Multi Year Transmission, Distribution and Retail Supply Tariff) Regulations, 2024, the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited (KPTCL) has filed its Annual Performance Review (APR) for FY 2024-25, before KERC for approval. The application of KPTCL is under consideration of KERC.

2.0 In the APR application for FY 2024-25, KPTCL has sought revised Annual Revenue Requirement (ARR) of Rs.6504.08 Crore with a revenue surplus of Rs. 71.78 Crore, Approval is hereby sought for the adjustment of excess/surplus income during the financial year 2026–27.

3.0 In accordance with the provisions of Electricity Act 2003, KERC (Multi Year Transmission, Distribution and Retail Supply Tariff) Regulations, 2024, it is hereby notified that persons who are interested in filing their objections to the above applications may file the same with the **Receiving Officer, KERC, #16 C-1, MILLER TANK BED AREA, VASANTHANAGAR, Bengaluru-560 052** along with the documents which they want to rely upon, in six sets duly supported by an affidavit within **30 days** from the date of the first publication of this Notification.

4.0 For reference for those who are interested, copies of KPTCL's Annual Performance Review (APR) applications are available for inspection and for purchase at the following offices:

(1) Office of the Chief Engineers (Electy), Transmission Zones, KPTCL, Bengaluru, Tumakuru, Hassan, Mysuru, Bagalkote and Kalaburagi.

(2) The Accounts Officer (Public Relations), Corporate Office, KPTCL, Ground Floor, Kaveri Bhavan, Bengaluru.

(3) Corporate Offices of Electricity Supply Companies (ESCOMs) situated at Bengaluru, Mysuru, Mangaluru, Hubballi and Kalaburagi.

5.0 A full set of applications is made available to the interested people at the above offices on payment of Rs.111/- in Kannada version and Rs.108/- in English version for each set of APR application by cash or DD or they may also obtain required portion of the application, by paying photocopying charges @ Rs.1/- per page, **within 10 working days** from the date of first publication of the notification. These documents are also available on the website of **KPTCL https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in**

6.0 The objections have to be **filed with KERC only.** But as directed by KERC, in order to expedite the process of objection filing and replies thereon, the objectors are also requested to simultaneously send a copy of their objection directly to the **Managing Director, KPTCL, Corporate Office, Kaveri Bhavan, Bengaluru-560 009**. The last date for receipt of public objections is **30 days** from the date of first publication.

For Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited
(Sd/-)
Managing Director,
KPTCL, Kaveri Bhavan, Bengaluru-560 009

Government of Karnataka

ABDUL NAZIR SAB STATE INSTITUTE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYAT RAJ

Lalithmahal Road, Mysuru - 570011.

No: SIRDPR-ADMOEST2/5/2024 Date: 01.01.2026

NOTIFICATION

Tender is invited through Karnataka Government e-procurement portal as per KTPP Act 1999 Rules 2000 for procurement of House Keeping Services for the Institute for a period of **01 Year.** Date: **30.01.2026** Time **3.00 PM** would be the last Date & Time for Submission of Tender. For more details visit website: **https://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or Contact 0821 2522903/906

Sd/- Director
ANSSIRD & PR
MYSURU

DIPR/MYSORE/1464/SSC/2025-26

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
U. R. RAO SATELLITE CENTRE
CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE GROUP
HAL AIRPORT ROAD, VIMANAPURA POST, BENGALURU - 560 017.
Phone: 080 2508-4156/4318/4185

BRIEF TENDER NOTICES

1. On behalf of the President of India, **item-rate** tender is invited for the following work:

Description	Details
Name of work	Supply & replacement of conventional luminaries with LED based luminaries at various buildings at ISITE Campus, Marathahalli, Bengaluru (Phase-IIa)
E-Tender Notice	URSC/C&MG/E/C/17/2025-26 Dt. 31/12/2025
Estimated cost put to Tender	₹ 69.34 Lakhs
Tender Document Details	**E-Tender**
Period of completion in months	Three (03) Months
Period during which the tender document can be downloaded.	From: 18:10 Hrs. on 01/01/2026 To: 23:59 Hrs. on 21/01/2026
Bid clarification	From: 19:00 Hrs. on 01/01/2026 To: 14:30 Hrs. on 22/01/2026
Last date and time of reply to Bid clarification.	Upto: 18:00 Hrs. on 23/01/2026
Last date and time for receipt of tenders.	Upto: 14:00 Hrs. on 27/01/2026
Due date and time of opening of tenders.	14:30 Hrs. on 27/01/2026
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	₹ 1,38,680/-

2. Interested tenderers may please refer Detailed Notice Inviting Tender (NIET) for eligibility criteria and other details in **website:www.isro.gov.in** and download the tender documents from **www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO**

Sd/-
Group Director, C&MG, URSC

Pak okays direct Dhaka-Karachi flights by B'desh airline

KARACHI, PTI: Pakistan's aviation authorities have issued permission to the Bangladesh national airline, Biman Airways, to start direct operations on the route of Dhaka-Karachi.

According to a report on Friday in the Jang Newspaper, permission has been given on a test basis for a period that will last until March 30.

The report, quoting civil aviation authority sources, said that details of flight schedules and operations will be finalised by next week, and Biman will operate its flights under Pakistan Civil Aviation rules.

Pakistan and Bangladesh governments have been discussing the possibility of resuming direct flights between Dhaka and Karachi since last year, after relations between both countries warmed up again since the ouster of former Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina Wajid, in August 2024, following a civil uprising.

Just a few days back the Bangladesh Ambassador in Pakistan, MD Hussain Khan, had confirmed both countries were close to signing a deal on allowing direct flights, which would boost trade, business, cultural ties and also increase people-to-people contacts.

US is 'locked and loaded' if Iran kills protesters: Trump

Any interference will equal destabilisation of whole region, says Iranian official

DUBAI, REUTERS

US President Donald Trump threatened on Friday to come to the aid of protesters in Iran if security forces fire on them, days into unrest that has left several dead and posed the biggest internal threat to Iranian authorities in years.

"We are locked and loaded and ready to go," he said in a social media post. The United States struck Iranian nuclear facilities in June, joining an Israeli air campaign that targeted Tehran's atomic programme and military leadership.

Top Iranian official Ali Larijani responded to Trump's comments warning that US interference in domestic Iranian issues would equal the destabilisation of the whole region. Iran backs groups in Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen.

The comments came as a local official in western Iran where several deaths were reported was cited by state media as warning that any unrest or illegal gatherings would be met "decisively and without leniency", raising the likelihood of escalation.

This week's protests over soaring inflation have spread across Iran, with deadly confrontations between demonstrators and security forces focused in the western provinces of Lorestan and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari.

State-affiliated media and rights groups have reported at least six deaths since Wednesday, including one man who authorities said was a member of the Basij paramilitary affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards.

During the latest unrest, the elected President Masoud Pezeshkian has struck a conciliatory tone, pledging dialogue with protest leaders over the cost-of-living crisis, even as rights groups said security forces had fired on demonstrators.

Speaking on Thursday, before Trump threatened US action, Pezeshkian acknowledged that failings by the authorities were behind the crisis.

"We are to blame... Do not look for America or anyone else to blame. We must serve properly so that people are satisfied with us.... It is us who have to find a solution to these problems," he said.

The sliding currency has compounded inflation, which has hovered above 36% since March even by official estimates, in an economy battered by Western sanctions.

"American people should know that Trump started the adventurism. They ought to watch over their soldiers," said Larijani, the head of Iran's National Security Council and a top adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Protesters attacking a government building in Fasa, in southern Iran, amidst spontaneous nationwide protests driven by dissatisfaction at the country's economic stagnation. AFP

ECONOMIC WOES

- The sliding currency has compounded inflation, which has hovered above 36% since March even by official estimates, in an economy battered by Western sanctions
- President Masoud Pezeshkian has acknowledged that failings by the authorities were behind the crisis.
- State-affiliated media and rights groups have reported at least six deaths since Wednesday

China's Xi to host South Korea's Lee from Sunday amid Japan tensions

SEOUL/BEIJING, REUTERS: China's President Xi Jinping will host South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on a state visit starting on Sunday, as Beijing looks to strengthen ties with Seoul amidst rising tensions with Japan over Taiwan.

Relations between China and Japan hit the lowest point in years after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi suggested in November that Tokyo could take military action if Beijing attacked Taiwan.

Lee's visit will mark his second meeting with Xi in just two months, an unusually short interval that, analysts say, signals China's keen interest in boosting economic collaboration and tourism.

And the timing of the invitation for a state visit - Lee's first to China since taking office in June - is also a calculated move to deepen bilateral relations particularly before the South Korean leader visits Japan, they say.

"China wants to emphasize South Korea's importance slightly more than before," said Kang Junyoung, professor of political economics at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

The moon rises on the eve of a Wolf Moon supermoon as passengers look out from a pod on London Eye wheel and a gull flies, in London, on Friday. REUTERS

Budanov: Enigmatic spy chief set to become Zelenskyy's top aide

▸ Kyrylo Budanov, set to become Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's new chief of staff, is a secretive figure who rose from relative obscurity to become head of Kyiv's formidable spy agency, reports AFP from Kyiv.

Referred to as the man "without a smile" in Ukrainian media, the 39-year-old has revealed little about his background or personal life, and maintains a low profile.

But he is credited with some of Kyiv's most audacious attacks inside Russia and occupied Ukrainian territory -- including an explosion on the Russian-built Crimean Bridge in 2022.

Regarded as a legend among Ukrainians but a wanted criminal in Russia, the combat veteran will now have unparalleled access to Zelenskyy and be at the steering wheel of the presidency -- a prospect that Moscow may find troubling.

"We will continue to do our job -- to defeat the enemy, defend Ukraine and work to achieve a just peace," Budanov said after accepting Zelenskyy's nomination.

Budanov was unknown to the public when he was appointed head of Ukraine's GUR military intelligence service in August 2020.

China launches missile destroyer

▸ The Chinese navy has commissioned a new "upgraded" missile destroyer as it's expanding its fleet at a breakneck speed to catch up with the US naval strength, reports PTI from Beijing.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy has commissioned a new Type 052D guided missile destroyer named Loudi, which features upgraded radar, weapon and network systems, official media here reported on Friday.

Zhang Shengwei, a crew member of the Loudi, was quoted by state-run Global Times as saying that the new-type warship adopts a new system and architecture, giving it enhanced combat capabilities in air defence, sea attack and task force command.

The Loudi can not only conduct long-range assault and strike missions against its targets, but also defend friendly ships in defensive missions, Zhang said.

Observers say the new ship's addition highlights the feverish pitch at which the Chinese navy is expanding its fleet, adding a ship a month.

Sri Lankan navy arrests 11 Indian fishermen, seizes trawler

COLOMBO, PTI: Sri Lanka Navy on Friday said it has arrested 11 Indian fishermen and seized their trawler for allegedly fishing in the island nation's waters.

Sri Lanka Navy spokesperson Commander Buddhika Sampath said that fishermen were held late on Thursday night "They were doing illegal fishing in the area, and despite warnings to leave, they continued fishing," he said.

After arrest, they were being brought to the Myladi fisheries inspectorate for further action, the navy said.

The fishermen issue is a contentious matter in India-Sri Lanka ties. Most of these incidents happen in Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka's northern tip.

FBI says it thwarted potential New Year's terror attack

Arrests 18-year-old man 'inspired by the IS group'

CHARLOTTE, AP

The FBI said Friday it had disrupted a plot to attack a North Carolina grocery store on New Year's Eve, arresting a man who officials said was inspired by the Islamic State group and had pledged loyalty to the extremist militants.

Christian Sturdivant, 18, was charged with attempting to provide material support to a foreign terror organisation.

Sturdivant was arrested by federal agents on Wednesday. He remained held following an appearance before US District Judge Susan Rodriguez on Friday morning, pending a hearing on January 7.

The lawyer representing Sturdivant in federal court on Friday didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment. An FBI affidavit filed in the case said Sturdivant came under investigation last month following information that an account that officials say was later connected to Sturdivant had made social media posts supportive of IS.

The affidavit says Sturdivant had been on the FBI's radar in January 2022, when he was a minor, after officials learned that he had been in contact with an IS member in Europe and had received instructions to dress in all black and commit attacks with a hammer.

"The @FBI and partners foiled another potential New Year's Eve attack from an individual allegedly inspired by ISIS," FBI Director Kash Patel said in a post on X, adding that the operation "undoubtedly" saved lives.

Eight US lawmakers push 'fair trial' for Umar Khalid

NEW YORK, PTI

A group of American lawmakers has written a letter to Indian Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra, urging a "fair and timely" trial for activist Umar Khalid in "accordance with international law."

US Representatives Jim McGovern and Jamie Raskin are among eight lawmakers who have expressed concern regarding the "prolonged pre-trial detention of individuals charged in connection with the February 2020 violence in Delhi," including Khalid.

In a related development, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani has written a note for Khalid, recalling his words on "bitterness" and the importance of not letting it "consume one's self."

Khalid and a few others have been booked under the stringent anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA) and provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the Delhi riots, which left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured.

"He has been detained without bail for five years for charges levied under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, which independent human rights experts have warned may contravene international standards of equality before the law, due process and proportionality"

"The US and India share a long-standing strategic partnership that has historically been rooted in democratic values, constitutional governance and strong people-to-people ties," said the letter written on December 30, 2025.

"It is in this spirit" that the lawmakers said they are raising their concerns regarding Khalid's detention.

The lawmakers claimed that human rights organisations, legal experts and global media have raised questions about the fairness of the investigation and legal process related to Khalid's detention.

He "has been detained without bail for five years for charges levied under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, which independent human rights experts have warned may contravene international standards of equality before the law, due process and proportionality."

As a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), India must uphold the rights of individuals to receive a "trial within a reasonable time or to (be released)" and "to be presumed innocent until proven guilty," the letter said.

The US lawmakers further added that they understand that these matters are presently under consideration before the Supreme Court of India and welcomed the news that Khalid received temporary bail to attend his sister's wedding.

They urged that Khalid should be granted bail and released for the duration of the court's proceedings.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (CR), his wife Ri Sol Ju (3rd Left) and their daughter Kim Ju Ae (C) visiting the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun to mark the new year in Pyongyang. The North Korean leader's daughter has made her first visit to a mausoleum further solidifying her place as her father's successor. AFP

Canada demands probe after AI pilot shows up drunk on duty

NEW DELHI, REUTERS: Canada's transport regulator has asked Air India to investigate an incident of a pilot reporting for duty under the influence of alcohol and failing two breathalyzer tests, a person familiar with the matter said.

The tests were conducted by Canadian police at Vancouver International Airport, after the pilot was asked to leave the aircraft, the person said.

The incident was labelled as a "serious matter" by Transport Canada in a letter to Air India and authorities are likely to pursue enforcement action, the person added.

The person requested anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media. Transport Canada did not respond to an emailed request for comment outside regular working hours.

In a statement, Air India confirmed the flight from Vancouver to Delhi on December 23 experienced a last-minute delay due to the incident, adding that an alternate pilot was brought in to operate the flight.

"The pilot has been taken off flying duties during the process of enquiry. Air India maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards any violation of applicable rules and regulations," Air India said.

"Pending the outcome of the investigation, any confirmed violation will attract strict disciplinary action in line with company policy."

Angelina Jolie visits Egypt's Rafah crossing amid Gaza aid plight

RAFAH, AFP

Hollywood star Angelina Jolie on Friday visited the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing into Gaza, where she spoke with members of the Red Crescent and truck drivers ferrying humanitarian aid, AFP journalists said.

Accompanied by an American delegation and greeted by former and current officials, Jolie said she was "honoured" to meet aid volunteers at the crossing.

A Red Crescent volunteer told the Oscar winner that "there are thousands of aid trucks just waiting" at the border crossing. According to local media, the actor and former special envoy for the UN refugee agency made the visit to see the condition of injured Palestinians transferred to Egypt and to look into aid deliveries into the devastated territory.

Jolie and the Egyptian authorities have yet to officially comment on the visit.

The Rafah border crossing was set to be reopened under the ceasefire in effect in Gaza since October, but has so far remained closed.

In a joint statement on Friday, Egypt and six other countries including Saudi Arabia "urged the international community to pressure Israel, as the occupying power, to immediately lift the constraints on the entry and distribution of essential supplies" to Gaza.

In early December, Israel announced that the Rafah crossing would be opened only for those wishing to leave Gaza, prompting Cairo to swiftly deny that it had approved such a move.

Jolie, one of Hollywood's most iconic figures, stepped down from her role as special envoy for the United Nations refugee agency at the end of 2022 after more than 20 years of service, saying she wanted to work on broader humanitarian issues.

The Israel-Hamas war began with the Hamas-led attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, that killed about 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage.

US actress Angelina Jolie arrives at the Egyptian Rafah border crossing as part of her visit to the North Sinai Governorate to inspect aid entering the Palestinian Gaza Strip, on Friday. AFP

Myanmar: 3 Indians repatriated

▸ Three Indian nationals trapped in a job scam in Myanmar have been repatriated to India, according to an official statement on Friday, reports PTI from Yangon.

The Indian embassy in Yangon announced that since July 2024, a total of 1,757 Indians have been repatriated to India.

All three who were victims of the Myawaddy scam centres were repatriated on Thursday.

"With cooperation from Myanmar authorities & organisations, 3 more Indian nationals from Myawaddy scam centres were repatriated via Yangon y'day," the Indian Embassy said on X.

"We strongly advise against such job offers," the Embassy said while concluding the post.

The government, on December 11 last year, informed Parliament that it has taken notice of international firms involved in fake recruitment job offers, and till date, over 6.7k Indians have been rescued from Cambodia, Myanmar & Lao PDR.

Hindu, Sikh groups caution against UK's anti-Muslim hostility definition

LONDON, PTI: Hindu and Sikh groups have sounded a note of caution as a proposed draft definition of anti-Muslim hostility being considered by the UK government was leaked to sections of the media recently.

Hindu Council UK has written to Communities Secretary Steve Reed this week to claim that the draft is not only "deeply flawed" but risks serious unintended consequences if it were to be formally adopted.

The BBC last month reported that the Working Group on Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia, set up by the government in February last year, had submitted a draft for adoption that excluded the term "Islamophobia".

"A central concern shared by Hindu, Sikh, Christian, secular, and free-speech organisations is that the definition fails to clearly distinguish between hostility towards Muslims as people and criticism of Islam as a belief system," reads the Hindu Council UK letter to the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

FERTILITY-FRIENDLY

China taxes condoms, contraceptive drugs in bid to spur birth rate

HONG KONG, REUTERS

China removed a three-decade-old tax exemption on contraceptive drugs and devices from January 1 in new steps to spur a flagging birth rate.

Condoms and contraceptive pills now incur value-added tax of 13%, the standard rate for most consumer goods.

The move comes as Beijing struggles to boost birth rates in the world's second-largest economy. China's population fell for a third consecutive year in 2024 and experts have cautioned the downturn will continue. China exempted childcare subsidies from personal income tax and rolled out an annual childcare subsidy last year, following a series of "fertility-friendly" measures in 2024, such as urging colleges and universities to provide "love education" to portray marriage, love, fertility and family in a positive light. Top leaders again pledged last month at the annual Central Economic Work Conference to promote "positive marriage and childbearing attitudes" to stabilise birth rates.

China's birth rates have been falling for decades as a result of the one-child policy China implemented from 1980 to 2015, and rapid urbanisation. The high cost of childcare and education as well as job uncertainty and a slowing economy have also discouraged many young Chinese from getting married and starting a family.

Women in pyjamas remain outside after evacuating their homes during a 6.5 magnitude earthquake, in Mexico City on Friday. AFP

Rupee slips past 90/USD level

MUMBAI, PTI: The Indian rupee slipped below the 90-mark and settled the day lower by 22 paise at 90.20 against the US dollar on Friday, amid disappointing macroeconomic data and strengthening of the American currency in overseas markets.

Forex traders said persistent foreign fund outflows and strong dollar demand from importers further dented investor sentiment.

However, weak crude oil prices and a surge in domestic equities cushioned the downside, they said, adding that any intervention by the RBI may support the rupee at lower levels.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 89.95 against the dollar, and touched an intra-day low of 90.25 and a high of 89.92 during the session.

At the end of Friday's trading session, the rupee was quoted at 90.20 against the greenback, down 22 paise from its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee depreciated 10 paise to close at 89.98 against the US dollar.

"The Indian rupee fell on Friday, breaching the 90-mark once again amid disappointing macroeconomic data and a positive US dollar index... FII outflows too weighed on the rupee. However, weak crude oil prices and a surge in the domestic equities cushioned the downside. RBI reportedly sold dollars via state-owned banks, which also prevented the pace of fall," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Commodities, Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.07% higher at 98.38.

Manufacturing output growth dips to 2-year low

Business sentiment hits three-and-a-half-year low

PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India's manufacturing output growth dipped to the lowest level in two years, dragged by weak demand and export orders, as per an industry survey report released by S&P Global on Friday.

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing fell to 55 in December, from 56.6 in the previous month. It has declined sharply after hitting a near five-year high of 59.2 in October.

A PMI reading above 50.0 signals an expansion in the sector, whereas a value below 50.0 indicates contraction. Despite the slowdown in growth, the data indicates an increase in output.

"Even with growth momentum easing, India's manufacturing industry wrapped up 2025 in good shape," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

"The sharp rise in new business intakes should keep companies busy as we head into the final fiscal quarter, and the lack of major inflationary pressures could continue to support demand," she added.

Growth in manufacturing output in December was the slowest since October 2022.

Part of the slowdown in total sales reflected a softer increase in international orders. New export orders rose to the least extent in 14 months. Where growth was signalled, panellists cited better demand from clients in Asia, Europe and the Middle East, S&P Global noted in its monthly report.

"We have seen a steady spell of softer growth in new export orders. In fact, the share of companies signalling higher international sales in December was about half of the average for 2025," said De Lima.

The pace of job creation in December was the lowest since March 2024. Outstanding business volumes did rise in December, but the pace of accumulation was only marginal as indicated by the respective seasonally adjusted index registering close to the no-change mark of 50.0.

The rise in stocks of purchases was the least pronounced in two years amid a softer upturn in buying levels and the usage of materials to supplement production.

December data indicated another increase in input costs at Indian manufacturers, which they attributed to greater prices for bamboo, chemicals, glass, leather and packaging. Little-changed from November, however, the rate of inflation was below its long-run average and among the lowest seen in 2025. Output prices likewise increased at a softer pace, one that was the least pronounced in nine months.

Business sentiment in December was the lowest in close to three-and-a-half years. While advertising, positive demand trends and new product releases were seen as tailwinds to the outlook, some firms were concerned about competitive pressures and market uncertainty.

Foxxcon, Samsung among 22 electronics projects okayed

Rs 41,863 crore investment expected; Karnataka to get 9 units

- The approved units are spread across eight states
- These units are estimated to generate production worth Rs 2.58 lakh crore
- To cover applications like mobile manufacturing, telecom, consumer electronics, automotive, IT hardware
- Projects expected to create over 33,000 jobs

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Union Government on Friday approved of 22 new proposals under the electronics component production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme which is likely to result in investments of Rs 41,863 crore and create over 33,000 jobs.

The approved units are spread across eight states including Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. These units are estimated to generate production worth Rs 2.58 lakh crore.

Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw handed over the approval letters to the selected companies that include Foxconn's Yuzhan Technology India, Hindalco Industries, Dixon and Samsung Display Noida Pvt Ltd.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister claimed that the PLI scheme has strengthened India's electronics manufacturing ecosystem, enabling large portions of domestic demand to be met indigenously.

With the latest tranche of approvals, a total of 46 applications have been approved under the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS) so far across 11 states, with a total investment of Rs 54,567 crore, generating direct employment for about 51,000 people.

Out of the 24 projects approved in the earlier two tranches, there was no Chinese-linked company. However, the latest approval includes Chinese firms in joint ventures.

One in every five projects approved so far under the scheme will be located in Karnataka. Out of the total 46 approved units, 11 will be in Tamil Nadu while nine will be located in Karnataka. Other major locations include Maharashtra (7), Andhra Pradesh (5), Uttar Pradesh (4), Haryana (3), Madhya Pradesh (3), and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Goa and Jammu & Kashmir.

The newly approved units will be involved in manufacturing of 11 target segment products, which have cross-sectoral applications such as mobile manufacturing, telecom, consumer electronics, strategic electronics, automotive and IT hardware products.

These 11 products include five bare components like PCBs, capacitors, connectors, enclosures and Li-ion cells; three sub-assemblies like camera module, display module and optical transceiver and three supply chain items like aluminium extrusion, anode material and laminate (copper clad).

'Opening nuclear sector to pvt arena unlocks big potential'

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

The Sustainable Harnessing of Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, a reform which allows for dilution of the monopoly of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) over India's atomic energy sector, is expected to unlock a potential of Rs 20 lakh crore-25 lakh crore, according to India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

The rating agency expects that allowing private engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) players in India's nuclear energy sector would provide a long-term sustainable order book for established entities, while the risks of liability persist.

"India's SHANTI Bill opens the nuclear sector to private EPC players, unlocking a Rs 20 lakh crore-25 lakh crore opportunity for those with strong balance sheets, while success depends on risk-sharing and government support," says Krishan Binani, Director, Large Corporates, Ind-Ra.

Previously, EPC entities have been receiving small package orders from the DAE and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), mostly for the creation of civil infrastructure and supply of specialised materials. With the introduction of SHANTI Bill 2025, private players are expected to play an extended and pivotal role.

Ind-Ra suggests capping the private sector's participation in the nuclear power sector at a maximum of 49% and minimum of 25%, with NPCIL/government holding the remaining stake.

Typically, the cost per MW of a pressurised heavy water reactor is anywhere between Rs 15 core-18 crore (can exceed Rs 20 crore), and the Voda Voda Energo Reactor costs between Rs 20 crore and Rs 25 crore per MW.

Given the ambitious expectation of 100GW by 2047 and the timelines needed for the construction of such capacity, the order inflows and construction activities should be starting within the next five years (lead time of at least five to eight years).

The overall order inflows shall be Rs 20,000 crore and 25,000 crore per GW, and hence there is a massive order book potential of Rs 20 lakh crore-25 lakh crore. While the entire order book might not flow to the private sector, a substantial amount of at least 25%-40% of the budgeted cost could give a boost to the EPC sector.

Ind-Ra believes that success of private sector participation depends on several factors, such as timely approvals for engineering & licensing activities, the availability of nuclear-grade concrete, limited domestic vendors, limited nuclear-qualified civil contractors, import dependencies subject to various geo-political issues, and major legislative hurdles, including nuclear liability risk (The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010) and Atomic Energy Act, 1962, which specifies the ownership to be with the Government of India.

Arya.ag raises Rs 725 crore in Series D funding

BENGALURU, DHNS: Integrated grain commerce platform Arya.ag has raised Rs 725 crore ($80.58 million) in equity from GEF Capital Partners. The investment will enable Arya.ag to deepen its engagement with farmers and their organisations to promote climate-smart, market-led agriculture practices. The funds will also strengthen Arya.ag's ability to control post-harvest losses at the farm gate and across the agricultural supply chain.

Founded in 2013 by Prasanna Rao, Anand Chandra and Chattanathan Devarajan, Arya.ag continues to grow as a profitable agritech. "This investment validates our approach of building integrated solutions that address the real challenges faced by India's farming community. We will use this capital to reach more farmers and develop products that reward sustainable practices at the farmgate. Our goal is to ensure that the smallest of stakeholders have access to information (data insights), finance and markets, through affordable technology," said Arya.ag Co-Founder and CEO Prasanna Rao.

The company reported net revenue of Rs 300 crore in H1 FY26, marking 28% growth over last year, while profits rose 39% to Rs 31.5 crore during the same period.

SFIL-DIL merger to create QSR chain with over 3k outlets

NEW DELHI, PTI

PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

Sapphire Foods India Ltd (SFIL) and Devyani International Ltd (DIL), the two leading operators of Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) brands KFC and Pizza Hut, are set to merge, creating a fast-food giant with over 3,000 stores.

The boards of DIL and SFIL, the two leading franchise operators of Yum! Brands, at their respective meetings on Thursday, approved a scheme of arrangement for the merger, which will have a combined turnover of nearly Rs 8,000 crore.

As per the scheme of arrangement, SFIL will merge with DIL, an RJ Corp firm promoted by the Jaipuria family. The combined entity will have operations in markets such as India, Nigeria, Nepal, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Besides Yum! Brands like KFC, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell, the combined entity will also hold licences for other global QSR brands, such as Costa Coffee, Tea Live, New York Fries, and Sanook Kitchen, in their respective markets.

Moreover, this strategic consolidation of the two QSR operators will also create a single unified Yum! India Franchisee for KFC and Pizza Hut.

The merger is happening at a time when Indian QSR chains are witnessing sluggish growth, lower margins, and almost flat demand growth.

According to the scheme of arrangements, 177 equity shares of DIL will be issued for every 100 equity shares of SFIL.

Currently, SFIL Promoters owns 25.35%cent stake in the company, of which Arctic International, a group company of DIL, will buy 18.5%. "Balance to get swapped for DIL shares," said DIL.

The proposed merger is subject to receipt of all customary regulatory and statutory approvals. "The process of obtaining these approvals is expected to take approximately 12 to 15 months, following which the merger will become effective," according to a joint statement.

The US-based Yum! Brands has granted its approval for the consolidation of DIL and SFIL. "Upon completion, the transaction will result in DIL becoming one of the largest QSR operators in India by combining the operations of both companies, positioning the merged entity for the next phase of accelerated growth, scale, and profitability," it said.

Maruti Suzuki produces record over 22.55 lakh cars in CY2025

BENGALURU, DHNS: The country's largest carmaker, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, on Friday announced that it has produced over 22.55 lakh units in CY2025, its highest-ever production in a calendar year.

This is the second consecutive year that Maruti has exceeded 20 lakh units in annual production, the company said in a statement. The production includes vehicles for domestic sales, exports and OEM supplies. The top-5 models by production volume during the year were Fronx, Baleno, Swift, Dzire and Ertiga. This milestone reflects the company's strong focus on delivering products in line with customer demand across domestic and international markets.

"This record production is a result of the dedication of our employees and the strong synergy that we share with our supplier partners. A high degree of localisation has enabled us to achieve such scale while maintaining world-class quality, highlighting the strength and global competitiveness of India's automotive manufacturing ecosystem," Maruti Suzuki India Limited Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Hisashi Takeuchi said.

Sensex jumps 573 points on gains in power, banking stocks

MUMBAI, PTI: Equity benchmark index Nifty hit its lifetime peak before closing 182 points higher on Friday, and the BSE Sensex jumped 573 points, powered by strong buying in power, banking and metal stocks.

Unabated capital infusion by domestic institutional investors amid a sharp rally in Asian peers also supported the domestic stock market, traders said.

Charting out a firm trend, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 573.41 points or 0.67% to settle at 85,762.01. During the day, it jumped 623.67 points, or 0.73%, to 85,812.27.

The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 182 points, or 0.70%, to 26,328.55. During the day, it surged 193.45 points, or 0.73%, to reach an all-time peak of 26,340.

From the 30-Sensex firms, NTPC, Trent, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Maruti, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank and Bharat Electronics were among the biggest gainers. In contrast, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan Company, Axis Bank and Bharti Airtel were the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,268.60 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 1,525.89 crore, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended significantly higher. Markets in Europe were trading higher.

JOB TREND

Tech hiring drops to 5-year low in Jan

Large IT firms expected to remain cautious

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

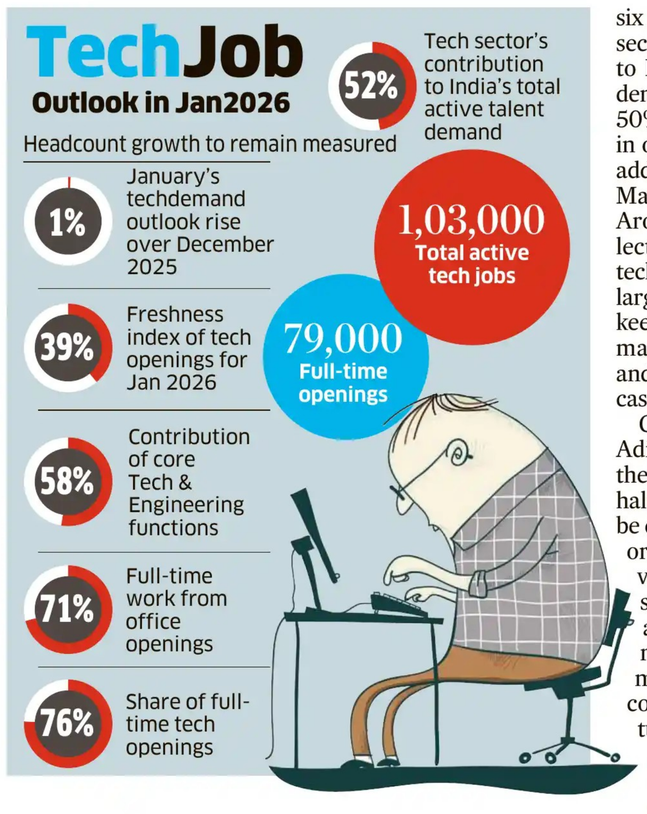
January 2026 kicks off with not-so-good news for techies as the month will see a 24% year-on-year drop in active tech jobs. The month will also witness the second-lowest tech jobs demand level recorded in the last five years. From its peak of 2,62,000 openings in January 2022, there is a massive 60% slide in job openings in January 2026 (1,03,000), according to specialist staffing firm Xpheno.

Of total active tech jobs, job openings in Bengaluru alone are 24,000, which is an 11% decline from December 2024 and a 37% drop year-on-year.

"The Indian tech sector, that once dominated the country's overall talent action, seems to have caught a cold in late 2022 and continues to struggle with a low-to-no recovery trajectory," Xpheno Co-founder Kamal Karanth said.

After being the first to recover from COVID-induced lockdowns, the tech sector went hyper on talent action from early 2021 to late 2022. The active demand from the tech sector peaked in January-February 2022, with more than 2,60,000 active demand and held 85% dominance in overall active jobs.

"However, when headwinds and adversities hit in the latter half of 2022, the tech sector rollback was the sharpest and fastest. As active demand quickly dropped by 50% to hit 1,33,000 in January 2023, the sector was set on a slide that it has found hard to recover from. But for a few short-lived periods of recovery, the overall slide down continues and the outlook for a recovery to regain earlier volumes is not encouraging," he added.



Of other job openings, GCCs-Tech alone is set to see a growth of 13% month-on-month at 17,000 openings and 7% year-on-year.

The report adds that overall, the tech sector continues to witness a downward trajectory in active talent demand volume. The volume of active openings in the sector has remained sluggish over the last six to eight months. The tech sector's current contribution to India's total active talent demand is 52%, going past the 50% mark for the second time in over 3 years now, Xpheno added. Biz Staffing Comrade Managing Partner Puneet Arora said hiring will be selective and focused on deep technical skills in 2026. "Some large IT firms are expected to keep hiring cautious due to macroeconomic pressures and short-term revenue forecasts," he added.

CIEL HR MD and CEO Aditya Narayan Mishra said the hiring outlook for the first half of the year is expected to be cautiously optimistic, with organisations shifting from volume-driven hiring to a skills-first approach. "Overall headcount growth may remain measured, but demand for specialised talent continues to gain momentum. Recruitment activity is expected to be led by sectors aligned with technology-driven transformation and essential services. Overall demand will focus more on niche skills than broad-based hiring," he added.

AP captures 25.3% of proposed investments in FY26: Report

SNV SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

Andhra Pradesh has firmly established itself as India's leading investment destination, capturing a remarkable 25.3% of all proposed investments in the first nine months of FY26, according to a recent report by Bank of Baroda. The state now stands well-ahead of peers such as Odisha (13.1%) and Maharashtra (12.8%), signalling a decisive shift in India's industrial and investment momentum toward the eastern and southern corridors.

The report highlights that over half of India's total proposed capital investment (51.2%) is now concentrated in just three states — Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Maharashtra — with AP emerging as the clear frontrunner. Overall, investment announcements across the country during the first nine months of the current fiscal touched Rs 26.6 lakh crore, marking an 11.5% increase compared to the same period last year.

Commenting on X, AP IT, Electronics and Communications Minister Nara Lokesh said, "Andhra Pradesh isn't catching up, it's pulling ahead. This is the result of consistent reforms, speed in decision-making and an unambiguous commitment to investors. Our focus has been clear—create a predictable policy environment, enable industry at scale and deliver on the ground."

The government attributed this performance to its investor-friendly governance, emphasis on speed of approvals, sector-focused policies and strong infrastructure push across ports, industrial corridors, logistics, energy and digital infrastructure. AP's proactive engagement with global and domestic investors, coupled with stable policies and execution-oriented administration, has translated into large-scale investment commitments across manufacturing, renewable energy, electronics, data centres, mobility and core infrastructure.

Industry observers note that the state's growing share of national investments reflects a broader realignment of India's growth geography.

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I,PRIYANKA AMIN,D/O B Hemraj Amin, residing at 11 Fairview Rd Scarsdale NY 10583 and home address 88/5 10th C main 1st block Jayanagar Bangalore 560011, hereby change my name from Priyanka Amin to Priyanka Amin Rao. Attested on Dec 19th,2025

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FIRST LESSON of the year

Shraddha A K writes about a teacher who introduces her class to New Year traditions across the world

The first day back at school after the winter break always felt like a new beginning. Mrs Meera, the class teacher of 5 B, entered the classroom with a familiar calm smile that her students had missed during the holidays.

The students were excitedly sharing stories and gossip from the holidays. Mrs Meera knocked on the table with the duster to grab the students' attention and said, "Alright, everyone. New year, new chances. Today, let's talk about how the world welcomes new beginnings."

Some sat up straight, while others grumbled about being interrupted. "Miss, are we... learning?" asked Rhea dramatically.

"Yes," said Mrs Meera with a smile, "but in a fun manner."

She wrote 'New Year Traditions' on the blackboard. "Let's start. Did anyone do anything special for New Year's Eve?"

Hands shot up across the class. "My mother made payasa," quipped Lakshmi. "We did the countdown and cut a cake as the clock struck 12," chirped Aarav gleefully.

"We cleaned the whole house!" groaned Tanay, mimicking the sweeping, mopping, and dusting, making the class break out in laughter.

"Did you know that in South Korea, people do not sweep on New Year's Day as it is believed to sweep away the good luck and fortune for the year ahead?" interrupted Shriya.

Mrs Meera signalled the class to calm down. "Traditions help us feel connected. Let us see how the world celebrates New Year's Day." Saying this, she pulled out tiny cards labelled with the names of different countries. The class leaned forward attentively. "We're going around the world now," said the teacher, and held up the first card.

"Spain: Eating 12 grapes at midnight — one for each stroke of the clock — to bring luck for the 12 months."

"That's so stressful. I can barely eat grapes on a normal day," muttered Rhea. "I don't like grapes, so can I try with oranges?" asked Navneeth.

"In Japan, temple bells are rung 108 times, each symbolising the clearing of the 108 human desires. People start the year feeling purified," said Mrs Meera.

"108 bells? Miss, imagine being the guy who rings the bells," said Daksh.

Mrs Meera nodded and read the next one: "Brazil — people wear white and jump seven ocean waves for blessings."

The Philippines was next. "They wear polka dots — symbols of coins — for prosperity," she added. The next card was Colombia. She added, "People walk around their block with empty suitcases for travel luck."

"That's such a vibe. Manifestation with cardio," whispered Kiara. Mrs Meera laughed softly at the children's wild imagination. "Traditions tell us what people hope for — luck, prosperity, love, health," she said and lifted the card of Denmark. "Here, people throw old plates at their friends' doors. More broken plates mean they are loved by more people."

"Miss, you would get like a thousand plates!" said a student. "I'd get none," fake-sobbed Aarav.

"I am going to do that! Next year I'll smash plates on Aarav's door! Why do we not have fun traditions like that here?" Tanay said.

"We have a lot of fun traditions as well. India's new year is not only on January 1st. India has different cultural calendars, so we end up celebrating many festivals, including new year celebrations, in grand style," said Mrs Meera.

"In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Ugadi is celebrated. A mix of neem leaves and flowers with jaggery is eaten to signify life's bitter and sweet moments to be cherished and welcomed equally, " said Mrs Meera.

"Miss, we do that!" said Lakshmi.

"In Maharashtra, there's Gudi Padwa. People put up a tall gudi, adorned with a silk cloth and a garland, outside their homes. It symbolises victory and fresh beginnings."

"Like a power flag?" asked Dev. "Exactly," smiled Mrs Meera.

"Vishu in Kerala begins with seeing the Vishukkani (a display with gold, fruits, rice, lamp), the first thing in the morning. It's believed that the year becomes as auspicious as what you see," she continued.

"Miss, so if I see my maths textbook first...?" questioned Vikram naughtily. "Then may your marks also be auspicious," laughed Mrs Meera, as she pinched his cheeks.

"In Tamil Nadu, people make mango pachadi, a combination of sweet, sour, and bitter flavours, symbolising all emotions in one dish," the teacher continued, asking, "Does anyone want to add any other traditions?"

"We celebrate Pohela Boishakh, the Bengali new year, by starting a new account book, called haal khata, hoping for good financial beginnings," Aarav shared.

"We celebrate Bihu with music, feasts, and the community. It is my favourite time to visit Assam," Zara added.

"We make a huge bonfire for blessings and eat sesame-jaggery sweets on Lohri. My grandfather often talks about how grand the bonfires used to be in Punjab when he was young," Tanay said excitedly.

Mrs Meera paused and looked at them warmly. "Let's finish with something simple. I want each of you to share one tradition, which you'd like to try this year." Hands rose quickly.

"I want to try Vishukkani," said Sohini. Bijoy asked, "Can I start a haal khata for my pocket money?"

"Miss, can smashing plates be an extra-curricular?" joked Tanmay. They laughed together.

Finally, they looked at Mrs Meera. "What about you, Miss? What would you choose?" they asked.

She paused. The class waited. "My family has a small tradition. On the morning of the new year, we write one thing we want to do that year — just one. A promise to ourselves, " she said softly.

"What is your promise this year?" asked Rhea.

Mrs Meera looked around at their eager faces and said, "To help each of you discover something new about the world... and about yourselves."

2 experiments using oil

These require basic household articles

Lava lamp experiment

Ingredients
- 1 transparent glass or jar
- Water
- Cooking oil
- Food colouring
- 1 antacid tablet

Method
- Fill the glass about one-quarter with water. Slowly pour cooking oil into the glass until it is almost full. Let the oil and water settle into separate layers.
- Add a few drops of food colouring. The colour will pass through the oil and mix with the water.
- Break the effervescent tablet into small pieces.
- Drop one piece into the glass and watch the colour rise and fall and move around like in a lava lamp.

What happened?
The tablet released gas that lifted the coloured water through the oil, and when the gas escaped, the colour blobs sank back down.

Raisins afloat

Ingredients
- 2 transparent glasses/ jars
- Water
- Cooking oil
- A handful of raisins

Method
- Fill one glass with water.
- Fill the second glass with cooking oil.
- Drop a few raisins into each glass.
- Observe the two glasses for the next few minutes. You will notice that the raisins will sink in water but float or move slowly in oil.

What happened?
Oil and water have different densities. Oil is thicker and lighter than water, which allows the raisins to float more easily.

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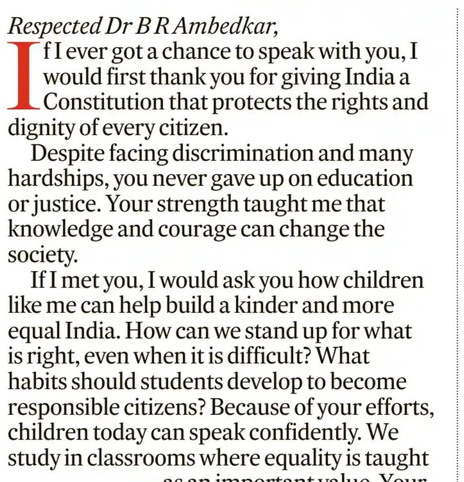


Dear Dr B R Ambedkar...

Open Sesame readers write letters to the architect of the Constitution

Respected Dr B R Ambedkar,

If I ever got a chance to speak with you, I would first thank you for giving India a Constitution that protects the rights and dignity of every citizen.

Despite facing discrimination and many hardships, you never gave up on education or justice. Your strength taught me that knowledge and courage can change the society.

If I met you, I would ask you how children like me can help build a kinder and more equal India. How can we stand up for what is right, even when it is difficult? What habits should students develop to become responsible citizens? Because of your efforts, children today can speak confidently. We study in classrooms where equality is taught as an important value. Your vision continues to guide our nation and inspire young minds like mine.

With deep respect,
POORNI M, 12
Bengaluru, Karnataka

Dear Dr B R Ambedkar Sir,

If I ever got a chance to meet you, it would be one of the greatest moments of my life. You had the dignity, courage, discipline, and determination to be called 'The chief architect of the Constitution of India'. You fought for equality and against discrimination. You significantly influenced the Reserve Bank of India.

Today I can study in safe and inclusive schools because the Constitution guarantees equal rights, opportunities, and scholarships for every child. Your ideas certainly moved India towards fast growth, and contributed to science and technology.

I wanted to know how you managed education even when life was very difficult. Also, how did you stay strong while fighting for equality for everyone in India? What dreams did you have for India? How can we, as children of today, help in building further better and kinder India?

With respect,
M VIKHYATH REDDY, 11
Bengaluru, Karnataka.

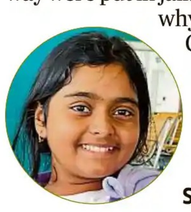
Dear Dr B R Ambedkar,

I am a pre-teenager living in the India you wanted to build. I feel very proud and safe because of the Constitution you gave us. Your ideas of equality, freedom, and justice still make young people like me feel happy and strong.

However, sometimes I feel sad when I see people who do not respect these important rights today. A short time ago, during the farmers' protests, many people who were protesting in a peaceful way were put in jail. Their voices were not allowed to be heard. When I saw this, I wondered why the right to speak freely and meet peacefully, which is written clearly in our Constitution, was being ignored. It feels wrong when these rules that should protect everyone are forgotten because of politics.

I wish we could follow your ideas in every part of our lives and really live by the Constitution you made with so much care. Your dream of an equal India is still in our hearts. But we need to be brave and honest to make it come true.

Yours sincerely,
SHRISHTI DEBROY, 11, Bengaluru, Karnataka



Dear Dr Ambedkar,

I have read many books about you and watched movies related to you. I am astonished by the way you wrote our Constitution, which treats everyone fairly and equally.

Here are my thoughts for building a better India. Firstly, I would like to focus on education. Students should have access to an affordable fee structure so that the common man can provide education to their children.

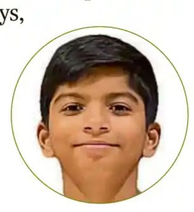
Students should be allowed to type notes on their laptops or tablets, as it is more comfortable and eco-friendly. The pass mark should be increased to 50% from 35%. This will encourage students to study more.

Secondly, I would like to focus on taxes. Taxes on useful things such as laptops and electronics should not exceed 5%. This can also be applied to food and clothes.

However, taxes on items such as cigarettes and vapes should be increased.

Last of all, I would like to focus on travel. Total airfare should consist of the base fare plus 5% taxes on the base fare. This will help reduce stress on roadways, local transport, and railways.

Yours sincerely,
HANISH SUBRAMANYA YOGANATH, 11
Bengaluru, Karnataka



Poems on nature

'Bruises & Butterflies', released in October last year, is the second poetry collection by Tamaara Nambiar, a class 9 student at Aga Khan Academy, Hyderabad.

The 14-year-old's new collection brings together 68 poems which are centred around nature, with verses on sunsets, oceans, autumn, ants, and lizards. It also includes a few introspective poems that explore pain, loneliness, hope, and unspoken words. Some of the poems also explore existential questions. Available online.

Tamaara's debut book, titled 'Unfinished', released in 2022.

LET'S DEBATE!

Want to take part in the upcoming *Open Sesame* debate? Share your thoughts in a crisp 200-word essay on the topic 'Should candy be banned?' Mail your works to *opensesame@deccanherald.co.in.* Entries close on January 22. Open to children below 16 years. Don't forget to mention your name, age, school and city. And send us a recent photograph.

Word of the Week

Viscosity

(noun)
— the quality of being thick and sticky.

Usage:
— Honey flows slowly because of its viscosity.
— Cold temperatures increase a liquid's viscosity.

This Week:

Just January

Open Sesame Quiz

Take the fun Open Sesame quiz, and stand a chance to win gift vouchers worth Rs 500. Open to children below 16 years.

Q1 On January 1, 1502, Portuguese explorers landed at Guanabara Bay, and gave it a name meaning 'January River'. Which city, on the western shore of that water body, bears that name?

Q2 January 26, our Republic Day, is also Australia Day. Which country observes NRM Liberation Day, on the same date, celebrating the National Resistance Movement taking power in 1986?

Q3 On January 28, 1986, the US Space Shuttle 'Challenger' exploded, killing all seven crew members. Who among them had been chosen to be the first teacher in space?

Scan the QR code
Or visit **bit.ly/DHopensesame** to participate in the quiz.

Q4 **Rhyme Time:** Two clues to which the answers rhyme with each other.
Clue A: Born on January 3, 1892, J R R Tolkien wrote 'The Lord of the __.'
Clue B: Male rulers.

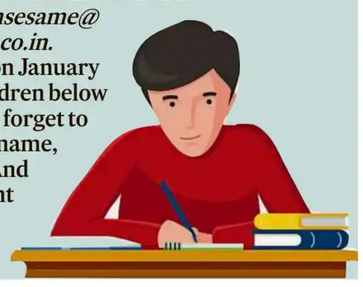
Q5 Who is honoured in the US on every third Monday in January?
Use these clues.
a) Atlanta
b) 1968
c) Memphis
d) Dream

LAST WEEK'S WINNERS: Chinmayee (13), Bengaluru; Anoosha Bhaskar (12), Sringeri; Shourya Rana (12), Holenarasipura.

POETS IN THE MAKING

Want to see your poetry in print?

Send in poems on the topic 'A Fresh Page' to *Open Sesame.* You may be featured in an upcoming edition. Mail your work — not more than 12 lines — to *opensesame@deccanherald.co.in.* Entries close on January 8. Open to children below 16 years. Don't forget to mention your name, age, and city. And send us a recent photograph.



ART CORNER

Love painting?

Want to showcase your flair for colours? Send your paintings on the theme 'Joyful January' to *Open Sesame* and stand a chance to get featured in an upcoming edition. Mail photographs of your work to *opensesame@deccanherald.co.in.* Open to children below 16 years. Don't forget to mention your name, age, and city. And send us a recent photograph of yourself. Entries close on January 15.

A group of Naxals surrendering before outgoing Director General of Police, Rashmi Shukla, in December, 2025.

Red corridor to factory floor

Mrityunjay Bose visits Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra to hear stories of former Maoists now leading regular lives

I have been working as a journalist for three decades, and I have visited Gadchiroli half a dozen times, mostly to cover the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections.

Located in eastern Maharashtra, the district has long been a hotbed of Naxalite activity. The dense forests in the region offer ample cover for the armed rebels.

On my most recent visit in December 2025, I could sense a distinct change. Residents moved about freely. This was in complete contrast to what I had witnessed in the past, particularly after the April 2018 twin encounters.

Seven years ago, the police had shot dead 40 Naxalites in the Boria Kasnasur jungles near the Indravati river in Bhamragad tehsil, and near the Rajaram Khandla post in the Jimalgatta forest in Aheri tehsil. The operation was jointly conducted by the C-60 commando team of the Anti-Naxalite Operations (ANO), the 9th Battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Gadchiroli district police. I had reported from the conflict zones. The tension had been palpable then.

Since then, police jeeps and armoured vehicles have been replaced by heavy trucks transporting ore on smooth roads.

Surrender and rehab

Gadchiroli was among the districts worst affected by Naxalism. Many tribals who had joined the movement have now surrendered. They live in Navjeevan Colony in Gadchiroli town. The town houses the offices of the collector and the superintendent of police, besides the elite C-60 commando unit, which has played a major role in curbing Naxalism.

About 80 surrendered Naxals work in Lloyds Metal and Energy Limited (LMEL) at Konsari, 60 km from Gadchiroli town. They draw five-figure salaries. I travelled from Mumbai to the Konsari steel plant and met some former Naxals.

"Life is totally different now," says 40-year-old Suresh Chamru Hichami. He joined the movement in 1999 and came out in 2007. He had served as a courier for his commanders, travelling between Nagpur and Mumbai.

Navjeevan Colony in Gadchiroli town, where the surrendered Naxals live. PICS BY AUTHOR

Some former Naxals who now work in a steel plant in Konsari.

Lloyds Metals and Energy Limited (LMEL) at Konsari.

Things changed in the mid-2000s when his sister got married to a policeman. "They started suspecting that I was an informant for the Naxalites. One day, I decided to get out of the movement," he says.

For Govinda Atala, a former deputy commander of a dalam (squad or unit) of CPI (Maoist), the change is big. The 30-year-old says, "I am happy with my job. I now live my life on my own terms." He works as the operator of a ring binding machine at the plant.

Atala had been enrolled in an 'ashram-shala' (a residential school for tribal and underprivileged children in the region). At 17, he left the school, following some of his classmates into the Naxal movement. "I underwent extensive training. I learnt how to use a carbine and an AK-47. After a few years, I realised this life was not for me," he says.

When Mallojula Venugopal Rao alias Sonu aka Bhupathi surrendered on October 15, 2025, it was big news. He was a CPI (Maoist) Politburo member and part of its Central Military Commission. He once called the shots all along the Chhattisgarh-Maharashtra- Telangana border. It remains one of the most sensitive areas.

An ideologue and strategist, Bhupathi and 60 others surrendered before Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who also holds the portfolios of home minister and Gadchiroli district guardian minister. Months earlier, on January 1, 2025, Bhupathi's wife Vimala Chandra Sidam alias Tarakka, a member of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee, had also laid down arms.

"In fact, 2024-25 has been significant in combating Maoism. A large number have surrendered after Bhupathi's video appeal," says superintendent of police Neelotpal.

Nambala Keshava Rao alias Kasavaraju, general secretary of the CPI (Maoist), was killed by a team led by Chhattisgarh police on May 21, 2025.

"After that, Bhupathi convinced the commanders and cadres to lay down their arms. After Kesavaraju, Bhupathi had been the voice of the movement," the police officer, known for his daring ways, says.

Gadchiroli's District Collector Avishyant Panda believes Naxalism will soon be a thing of the past. "Gadchiroli is like any other district today. About Rs 3 lakh crore is being invested in the steel sector. This is expected to create 40,000 to 50,000 jobs. The district has massive quantities of superior quality iron ore," he says.

A commerce graduate, Bhupathi was involved in plotting and executing several major attacks in the 'red corridor' for about 40 years. The 'red corridor' is a name given to regions of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh known for Naxal activity.

On November 24, 2011, Bhupathi's brother Mallojula Koteswara Rao aka Kishenji (55) was trapped and killed by security forces in West Bengal's West Midnapore district.

On September 13, 2025, Kishenji's wife Pothula Padmavathi alias Kalpana (62) surrendered before the Telangana Director General of Police, Dr Jitender, in Hyderabad.

"Active Maoists must leave the path of violence, surrender, and join the mainstream to work among the people," Bhupathi said in a video appeal days after his surrender. Hundreds of cadres laid down arms in Chhattisgarh and Telangana, and also in Gadchiroli, following his appeal.

His message: "We have realised that in the changing situation, we cannot wage an armed struggle. We are now working to solve the people's problems under the Constitution."

Many surrendered Naxals agree with him. "Sonu dada is correct. Many of my colleagues in the Naxal movement are no more. They died in encounters along the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border," says a former rebel.

He says many like him were attracted to the movement at the Maoists' village meetings. "We joined them and gave them our prime. But we got nothing in return. We now realise that we were wrong," says the man, now in his 40s.

Many former Maoists work in the canteen of the LMEL plant. "Here, people have accepted us whole-heartedly. I would have never imagined that I would be able to start life afresh," says Pramila Bohga, a 31-year-old woman.

She had joined the movement after watching street plays put up by Maoist groups operating in the region. "They would speak about 'jal-jangal-zameen'—causes close to our heart," says Pramila, who was part of various Maoist groupings in Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra before surrendering in 2024. Her father had died in 2023, and she had been keen to return to her family and support them.

Most of the former rebels I spoke to stated that they were driven to the movement due to the issue of 'jal-jangal-zameen', poverty, socio-economic injustices and exploitation of tribals.

"Senior members of the rebel groups would come to our villages and speak to the people to join the movement. They would highlight the issues concerning the tribal community," a surrendered Naxal said, referring to the Madia and Gond communities.

"The assurance that the movement represented the voices of the voiceless and gave power to the powerless was one of the driving factors," another said, noting that the marginalised and underprivileged felt that taking up weapons was the way to bring in change.

Janu Hadu also works in the canteen. She and her husband, Sainu Hadu, now parents of two children, surrendered a few years ago. "I did sentry duties and military work in the movement," says Janu, now in her 30s. "We will now be able to give better lives to our children."

Nomadic life

Maoists lived a nomadic life, and even when they were unwell, they did not seek medical attention. Often, they had no contact with their families for months.

"All this was taking a toll on our health. We felt lonely and struggled with depression," one of the surrendered Naxals says.

On June 6, 2025, Chief Minister Fadnavis, during his visit to the district, attended the wedding ceremony of a dozen surrendered Maoists. On that day, 12 Naxals surrendered. One of them was Sapana alias Sapanakka alias Swapna alias Papakka Buchayya Chaudhary, wife of Geereddy Pavanananda Reddy, a top functionary of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZCM), a division of CPI (Maoist).

LMEL managing director B Prabhakaran says he is ready to hire more surrendered Naxals. Vice president (corporate services) Col S K Mahapatra (retd) describes the former Naxalites as "sincere and disciplined". The men work as drivers, welders, bar benders and crane operators, while the women are mostly employed in the canteens.

In Navjeevan Colony, they live in individual houses. They mingle with others and shop at the markets like anyone else. They get housing under various government schemes.

"There is a change now," says Vijay Gawade, who hails from Udera village in Etapalli tehsil. He gave up his Maoist life about a decade ago. "I was part of a dalam that conducted military operations," he says.

During his days in the movement, he walked from place to place, camp to camp, and crossed streams and rivers with backpacks filled with weapons and explosives.

"That was our routine. There was a constant threat of encounters. At some point, I began to feel I had to live a normal life like others," says a former Naxalite, requesting anonymity.

Down to 10

"In January 2024, Gadchiroli had around 100 Maoists. Now we have barely 10. We are appealing to them to lay down their arms. We have a comprehensive surrender-cum-rehabilitation plan," says Neelotpal.

The authorities are assisting former Maoists to pass Class 8 exams to help them qualify for courses of the Maharashtra State Skill Development Corporation.

"LMEL is already operational. JSW Steel will invest Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the next seven to eight years. Surjagad Ispat is developing a large, integrated steel plant in Gadchiroli. This would make Gadchiroli the biggest steel manufacturing complex in the world," says District Collector Panda.

Education revamped

Primary and high school education is getting a boost in the region. Under a unique initiative, 71 libraries are now functional in Gadchiroli district.

In the last two-and-a-half years, 205 young men and women have been selected for the police force, and many others have secured jobs in the revenue department and other government departments.

MoUs have been signed by Gondwana University to set up colleges for undergraduate and engineering courses. The Gadchiroli Police Skilling Institute provides training in artificial intelligence (AI) and software development. Mahindra Tractors has entered into an agreement with the Maharashtra government to establish a skill development centre in Gadchiroli.

The Centre has set a deadline to end Naxalism—March 31, 2026, and sees Gadricholi as an example of how change can be ushered in.

Covered in thick forests and located in the Godavari river basin, the hilly district is a delight for naturalists, conservationists, paleontologists, meteorologists, archaeologists, mythologists, explorers, travellers and tourists.

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Rehab policy

About 725-plus Maoists have surrendered in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district since the launch of the surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy in 2005.

Under a revised policy, top-rank cadres receive Rs 2.5 lakh and middle and lower-rank cadres Rs 1.5 lakh, kept in fixed deposits for three years and handed over subject to good conduct.

Rehabilitation also includes a monthly stipend and vocational training. CSR funds are being channelled into the programme.

District size

Gadchiroli (14,412 sq km) is bigger than Goa (3,702 sq km), and Tripura (10,491 sq km), and smaller than Nagaland (16,579 sq km). It is about a third of Kerala.

The uprising

The Naxalite-Maoist insurgency began after an uprising in Naxalbari, West Bengal in 1967. It was an armed revolt led by the region's tribal groups and radical Communist leaders. Since then, the movement has spread to other states of India including Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra and Kerala. Their goal is to overthrow the Indian government and establish a Communist society. Influenced by Maoist idealogy, their fight is for land reform and tribal rights, among other things. The movement lost momentum after the government intervened with strong measures to curb the violence in the late 2000s.

MUSICANA

OutStation and the return of the boy band

The Indi-pop group features talent from smaller cities such as Udupi and Prayagraj, writes Barkha Kumari

At the turn of the 21st century, Indian pop (Indi-pop, largely Hindi) was losing ground to rampant piracy and Bollywood music. To re-energise it, record labels borrowed from Western playbooks, and launched pop groups through talent hunts and reality shows. Within three years, acts such as A Band of Boys, the all-women group Viva, and the mixed-gender band Aasma burst onto the scene. They scored hits like 'Gori', 'Meri neend', 'Hum naye geet sunaye', and 'Chandu ke chacha', but faded within a few years.

The Indi-pop landscape appears to be circling back to that quest, with the debut of OutStation in 2025. The boy band comprises 17- to 22-year-olds selected through a nationwide talent hunt. They have released one single, 'Tum se', and boast over 1 lakh followers on Instagram.

The talent hunt aimed to uncover musical voices from the country's largely untapped corners and was followed by an intensive bootcamp covering vocal training, dance, and fitness.

Bhuvan Shetty is from Udupi, Hemang Singh from Prayagraj, Shayan Pattem from Hyderabad, Mashaal Shaikh from Goa, and Kurien Sebastian from Delhi.

In an email interview, the band said that, although born much later, they are aware of earlier Indi-pop groups and the charm of their songs. At the same time, they are focused on carving out their own niche. "Our core is to make melodies and sounds that feel Indian. We love the romanticism and dreaminess of these sounds," they wrote. While they enjoy many genres, pop music is their shared passion.

OutStation is mentored by 17-time Grammy nominee Savan Kotecha, the Indian-American songwriter-producer behind hits for Ariana Grande, The Weeknd, Justin Bieber, One Direction, and Ed Sheeran. His key advice to the group has been to show their fans as much love as the fans show them. A recent concert in Guwahati drew over 3,000 fans, and left them overwhelmed.

'Tum se' is, in fact, dedicated to their fans. They call them 'Passengers,' recognising the role fans play in a band's musical journey. Its video was shot live at a 'prom night' in Mumbai attended by fans.

Their live setlist features 'Tum se' along with selections from around 30 unreleased demos. "Some are fully acoustic, some anthemic, some dance, and some even metal!" they said.

Asked why India has yet to produce a boy or girl band with lasting global recall, they said, "Global impact isn't our goal right now. India is so large and diverse. We hope to spread our music here first." They are grateful the industry is backing young acts like themselves and girl pop group W.i.S.H, which launched in 2024. OutStation also opened for Akon's Mumbai concert last November.

The band released its debut single 'Tum se' in November 2025.

In Hindi, OTT films beat theatre releases in the year that was

Industry insiders tell Rajiv Vijayakar filmmakers fared better when they were freed from grand opening week expectations

While the theatrical scene in 2025 for Hindi cinema was dismal — with only three blockbusters in 'Dhurandhar', 'Chhaava' and 'Saiyaara' and a few hits and tepid successes — the OTT scene was strobe-lit with several notable movies.

Brilliantly made 'The Storyteller', 'The Great Shamsuddin Family' (Jio Hotstar) and 'Baramulla' (Netflix), socially impactful fares like 'Mrs' (Zee5), 'The Mehta Boys' (Prime Video) and 'Aap Jaisa Koi' (Netflix), entertainers 'Dhoom Dhaam' (Netflix) and 'Inspector Zende' (Netflix), the stylised 'Detective Sherdil' and 'Jewel Thief — The Heist Begins', the gripping 'Bhagwat: Chapter 1: Rakshas' and the fairly involving 'Raat Akeli Hai: The Bansal Murders' topped the scene.

On the other hand, overrated fares like 'Costao' and 'Tehran' (Zee5), 'Stolen' (Prime Video), 'Sarzameen' (Jio Hotstar), 'Kaalidhar Laapataa', 'Nadaaniyan' and 'Mandala Murders' (Netflix) attempted to cash in on media-hype, though there was lot to desire in the way they were conceived and made.

Veteran distributor-exhibitor Raj Bansal says that while there are multiple factors for the bleak big-screen scenario, there are three main reasons for the OTT splurge.

"First, filmmakers are not confident about their theatrical prospects. Second, it is difficult nowadays to get good screens and correct show timings as multiplexes play favourites. Three, filmmakers get a decent price with online releases."

Bansal adds, "But OTT releases score over films in theatres for one main reason that simply cannot be compared: at most, you are paying just Rs 10 per movie for a family to watch it at home, at your convenience. But for a theatrical watch, you need to spend on tickets, travel, parking and food. That is why audiences want value for the big money they have to spend on a theatrical release!"

'The Great Shamsuddin Family' stood out among OTT releases in 2025.

Madhuri Dixit Nene, who also acted in the OTT film, 'Maja Ma', told a tabloid, "Nowadays, by the time people come home from work, it is 8.30 or 9 pm and going out to watch a film, except on weekends, is difficult!" Therefore, watching a film on OTT is "practical and cost-effective".

Are not a lot of such films planned for OTT release? "Yes, but about 20 percent of them aim for a theatrical release, so OTT is their last option!" says Bansal. Agrees filmmaker Ananth Narayanan Mahadevan ('The Storyteller'). "I think every film is a commercial proposition and if possible, I will release every film of mine in a movie hall. 'The Storyteller' had all the elements of a theatrical release: it was a Satyajit Ray story told with humour and wit. From Busan and Palm Springs to Kerala and IFFI, the response at film festivals was phenomenal. I told Jio Studios this, but they decided on the OTT route. But now I think that this was a blessing in disguise! Theatre-owners don't have the patience needed for a film to grow by word-of-mouth, so if my first week collections had not been profitable, I would never have got a second week's chance," he says.

Aditya Suhas Jambhale, who directed 'Baramulla', admits, "I would have loved a theatrical release, as visuals, sound and music in films are best experienced in a movie hall. But the producer has to calculate his risks and I must support his decision. On the high side, Netflix is a classy platform and my film saw release in 190 countries."

Weighing in on the dilemma, Boman Irani says, "OTT worked best for my film, 'The Mehta Boys'. Initially I was sceptical about releasing it online, but someone told me that all our favourite films down the decades, Indian or international, have been seen most on television — like 35-year-olds watching 'Star Wars' (1977) that was released before they were born."

Is there a way to ascertain their success quotient? Apparently not, says Bansal. But Irani asserts, "In theatres, if a film does not make big numbers despite a successful return of investment, it can be considered a flop. Here it will be considered a success based on the response it gets. So the biggest benefit of OTT is that there is no pressure on you. And it's been a great year watching so many extraordinary films that otherwise may not have been made at all, as there is no pressure to please a certain kind of people."

A political message in Vijay's tearful GOODBYE

E T B Sivapriyan profiles the mass hero who has announced he will henceforth devote all his time to politics. 'Jana Nayagan', releasing next week, is billed as his cinema swansong

Late last week, an emotional Vijay told his fans in Kuala Lumpur: "My last film (is) 'Jana Nayagan' (People's Hero)...I know... it is a little painful, right?" He was speaking at the audio launch of the film. His fans screamed in response.

Bankrolled by Bengaluru-based K V N Productions and set to hit the screens on January 9, 'Jana Nayagan' is being touted as the swansong of Vijay's 33-year-long, highly successful career in Tamil cinema. The actor now wants to test his popularity in politics.

The phenomenon of actors turning to politics is not new in Tamil Nadu. Vijay's predecessors — M G Ramachandran and J Jayalalithaa — made a smooth transition from cinema to politics, eventually becoming chief ministers.

Despite the Malaysian government's restrictions — on political discussions — the audio launch was attended by about 80,000 fans from across the globe. It sent out a subtle political message — he was giving up a lucrative career to repay the debt of love he had accumulated over three decades.

Vijay is the son of director S A Chandrasekar, whose films helped Vijayakanth attain stardom. Vijay debuted in Tamil cinema in 1992 through 'Naalaya Theerpu' (Tomorrow's Verdict). The movie was not successful at the box office.

Determined to make his son a star, Chandrasekar, whose films tackled societal ills, guided Vijay through those early years by having Vijayakanth do a cameo in 'Senthoorapandi'. Vijay's real break came in 1995 when his movies 'Coimbatore Mappillai' and 'Poove Unakaaga' became blockbuster hits.

Over three decades, Vijay has grown into one of Tamil cinema's biggest actors, a mass entertainer, and a money-spinner for his producers, serving as one of India's highest paid stars.

A captivating dancer and an expressive actor, Vijay has tried every genre — from comedy to romance to action. He has also donned anti-hero and family roles. He delivered romantic hits like 'Kathalukku Mariyathai' and 'Love Today' in the 1990s, before shifting to masala action films like 'Thirumalai' in the early 2000s.

His 2004 film 'Ghilli', a remake of Telugu actor Mahesh Babu's 'Okkadu', was a game changer, cementing Vijay's image as a mass hero second only to Rajinikanth, with whom he shares many parallels. Vijay pulled off comedy scenes with ease and delivered punch lines just like the superstar. At the theatres, his mannerisms drove his fans into a frenzy.

His boy-next-door looks made his movies a family watch and he was especially popular in the B and C centres. Children were his biggest fans as they enjoyed his dance movements and recreated them at home.

While dominating the cinema landscape alongside mass hero Ajith, Vijay also built an empire of fans who ruled Tamil social media. The Vijay-Ajith fan rivalry has been legendary in Tamil Nadu for over a decade, though the actors have always praised each other in public.

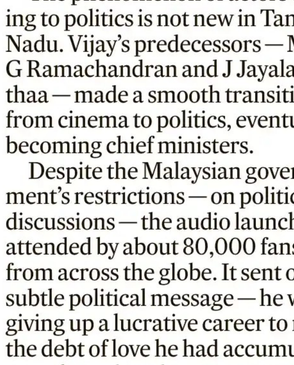
If action and masala movies dominated his career in 2000s, Vijay shifted to social themes in the next decade, through hits like 'Thuppakki', 'Kathi', 'Mersal', and 'Sarkar'. After 'Kathi' and 'Mersal' in 2014 and 2017, Vijay's popularity hit an all-time high, making him one of the most-followed celebrities on social media platforms.

"He is the biggest star in Tamil cinema today. He was the best bet for many producers, who knew they would get their money back. Tamil cinema will certainly miss him," a film critic told *Showtime*.

Vijay's films have hinted at his political ambitions from the early 2000s, and not just in recent years. Like other Tamil heroes who entered politics, Vijay followed the tried and tested route, portraying himself as a saviour fighting corruption and nepotism. He even used audio launches to tease his political entry.

Ilaya Thalapathi (young commander) was the sobriquet his fans gave him in his formative years, but for the past few years, Vijay has been known only as Thalapathi.

Whether Vijay will be successful in winning over the people to his politics is anyone's guess. But Vijay will always remain the Thalapathi for his fans.



Vijay in 'Jana Nayagan'.

Will Vijay recreate MGR magic?

R Kannan, biographer of MGR and C N Annadurai, sees Vijay as a politician with no specific ideology yet.

In his words:

MGR began his public career at 35 in 1952. He carefully crafted a film image, and through his charitable acts (both organic and promotional), he built a solid fan base that became the backbone of the DMK. Vijayakanth came closest to the matinee idol in cultivating a do-gooder image. Vijay lacks such a past, although his fan association has been involved in welfare schemes. It is unclear to me whether the MGR trajectory is still the sure path to success, or whether, with the advent of information technology and the AI age, the same can be bypassed.

Given the crowds he is attracting, Vijay will likely poll a substantial number of votes, mainly from the opposition. Whether this alone will catapult him to the second place by virtue of the percentage of votes polled remains to be seen. Vijay has yet to articulate a concrete policy and how he will make a difference if he is voted to power.

NTR came to power in nine months, peddling Telugu pride. Other than DMK and BJP bashing, it is unclear what Vijay stands for. Despite all this, he is the state's largest crowd puller today, dwarfing the others.

FEEDBACK
Send your ideas and comments to dhonsat @deccanherald.co.in

MOVIE REVIEWS

Loosely knit screenplay bogs down war film

AMOGH RAVINDRA

★★½☆☆

Ikkis

Hindi (Theatres)

Director: Sriram Raghavan

Cast: Agastya Nanda, Dharmendra, Jaideep Ahlawat

Agastya Nanda plays war hero Arun Khetarpal.

Known for tightly wound thrillers, Sriram Raghavan shifts gears with a war biopic on Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, a tank commander whose bravery during the 1971 Indo-Pak war earned him a place in history. At just 21, Arun's actions at the Battle of Basantar defined his legacy, as the film chooses remembrance over spectacle.

Agastya Nanda plays Arun, a young officer eager to prove himself. The narrative moves between 1971 and 2001, as Arun's father, Brigadier M L Khetarpal, visits Pakistan for a school reunion and meets Major Nasir, allowing Arun's courage to be reflected even through the eyes of the enemy. From NDA days to his final stand, the film traces a brief life led with conviction, leaving behind more than a war story.

Nanda gives it his all, but the performance feels restrained, with visible stiffness and a lack of conviction in both dialogue and expression. Dharmendra, on the other hand, is quietly overwhelming. In his final film, his warmth and ease feel less like acting and more like presence. Jaideep Ahlawat matches that sincerity with a grounded, emotional turn, and together their scenes carry the film's strongest emotional weight.

'Ikkis' is driven by sincerity and clear intent, with Raghavan avoiding chest-thumping nationalism and familiar war film beats. But intent alone is not enough. Uneven direction, a loosely stitched screenplay, and uninspired dialogue soften the impact. It wants to land like a punch, but pulls back too often, leaving the film weaker than it should be.

Snowflakes, siblings in Winslet's weepie

RASHMI VASUDEVA

★★★½☆

Goodbye June

English (Netflix)

Director: Kate Winslet

Cast: Helen Mirren, Kate Winslet, Timothy Spall, Andrea Riseborough

At the very heart of Kate Winslet's directorial debut is June. Ensconced in pain, shrinking every minute, yet wholly present — luminous and ethereal, like the snowflakes she so loves. Is that because of Helen Mirren, who plays her with such majestic brittleness, or is it the character itself? The answer hardly matters in this admittedly sentimental holiday movie that pulls at even your black little cynical heart.

June's cancer has spread, and around her hospice bedside sit her children: Julia (Kate Winslet), Helen (Toni Collette), Molly (Andrea Riseborough), and Connor (Johnny Flynn). The room is heavy with grief, with memories of fights that have left scars, unexpressed grudges, and bitter resentments. And then there is their father, Bernie (Timothy Spall), who is as annoying as he is funny; brusque, but with a heart bursting with affection. Forced to confront it all, the siblings are pulled apart as much as they come together.

Winslet's frames are intimate and cosy, and she really does try to keep the mawkishness at bay. But that's hard when the plot is all about a much-loved mother dying and all you are doing is sitting around waiting to know when. There are predictable reunions, and the last-minute emotional ups play out quite reassuringly. Molly's redemption arc, though, is quite patchy and does not ring very true.

Still, like a good holiday movie ought to, it makes you reflect on your own life, loves, relationships, and what to hold on to and what to let go. And yeah, keep those hankies handy.

Helen Mirren and Kate Winslet in 'Goodbye June'.

Harsh realities of LA's drug world

SHRADDHA A K

Mathew Perry

★★★☆☆

Matthew Perry: A Hollywood Tragedy

English (Discovery+)

Director: Robert Palumbo

This 61-minute documentary explores the ongoing case surrounding the death of actor Matthew Perry, best known for his role, Chandler Bing, in the sitcom 'Friends'. While Perry is immediately associated with 'Friends', many also remember his struggles with addiction.

He had been open about his battles with alcohol and painkillers. However, what shocked the public the most about his death was not only its suddenness but also the fact that he had relapsed after years of sobriety.

The documentary provides a unique opportunity to revisit Perry's life, his legacy, and the final chapter of his story through an intimate investigative lens. It examines unsettling evidence suggesting a covert network accused of supplying the ketamine found in his system.

As prosecutors charge five individuals — including two doctors and a woman referred to as Hollywood's 'Ketamine Queen' — the documentary follows a gripping investigation leading to a high-stakes courtroom battle. This raises urgent questions about power, access, and accountability within the Hollywood industry.

The film also covers chapters from Perry's book 'Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing', in which he discusses how he fell into addiction. Additionally, it narrates Perry's life through the perspectives of his old friends and co-stars, along with journalists, detectives, and attorneys involved in the case. One significant aspect that remains missing is the absence of the remaining five actors from the sitcom — their inclusion would have added a heartfelt touch, considering their shared experiences.

As the documentary emphasises, this is not just a film about an actor who died from an overdose; it's a story about a man who sought a happy life but struggled with addiction, which ultimately led to his untimely death.

Weak writing derails heartwarming drama

PRANATI A S

★★½☆☆

Theertharoopa Tandeyavarige

Kannada (Theatres)

Director: R Jagannatha

Cast: Nihar Mukesh, Rachana Inder, Sithara, Ravindra Vijay, Ajit Hande

Nihar Mukesh and Sithara.

The year's first Kannada release, 'Theertharoopa Tandeyavarige', is a tribute to single mothers, told through the eyes of a young vlogger desperately searching for his father. While the film is philosophical and warm at heart, it is let down by mediocre writing.

Directed by Ramenahalli Jagannatha, known for 'Hondisi Bareyiri', the film follows travel vlogger Pruthvi (Nihar Mukesh), who lives with his mother Janaki (Sithara) in the picturesque town of Mudigere. From the start, it is clear that Pruthvi harbours unresolved issues with his mother and resents their neighbour Vishwanath (Rajesh Nataranga), whom the town suspects Janaki is romantically involved with. When the truth finally comes to light, Pruthvi goes on a journey of self-realisation and acceptance, learning to embrace life as it is.

Although the film has its moments, it falters due to a weak screenplay, forced humour, and dull performances from the lead actors. The film gains momentum only towards the interval, thus making the first half a tedious watch overall. Jagannatha gives Pruthvi's vlogging career too much screen time, and it adds very little to the story.

Other sequences also feel unnecessary, including a subplot about rivalry with his childhood classmate.

That said, the film has some interesting subplots. It becomes compelling with the entry of Ravindra Vijay as a Physics teacher — a character reminiscent of Rancho from '3 Idiots'. The arrival of Pruthvi's long-lost father also adds weight. Ajit Hande's portrayal of journalist Ravi Ramanathapura bears an uncanny resemblance to a tabloid journalist known for his column 'Love Lavike'.

'Theertharoopa Tandeyavarige' may not be remarkable, but it looks refreshing, coming especially after three star-led disasters in December.

Potts, Bashir in England squad for 5th Test

SYDNEY, AFP: Seamer Matthew Potts and spinner Shoaib Bashir were included in a 12-man England squad Friday for the fifth Ashes Test against Australia, with a final decision on who gets the nod likely after a better look at the wicket.

Potts is the only unused seamer from the tourists' original 16-man squad and gets his chance after Gus Atkinson limped off with a hamstring issue in the fourth Test at Melbourne.

Fellow quicks Jofra Archer and Mark Wood have similarly succumbed to injury. Wood (knee) only played the first Test in Perth while Archer was ruled out after the third Test in Adelaide with a side strain. Bashir was considered England's top tweaker when they arrived, but has yet to play with spinning all-rounder Will Jacks preferred.

England squad: Ben Stokes (capt), Shoaib Bashir, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Matthew Potts, Joe Root, Jamie Smith, Josh Tongue.

Manas pegs back Karnataka with an epic 184

BENGALURU, DHNS: Gujarat's Manas M Dave, who repelled Karnataka's bowlers on the opening day with an even century, continued to frustrate the visitors on the second day by adding another 84 runs to his individual tally to leave the visitors with a lot of fighting to do in their Cooch Behar Trophy quarterfinal clash.

Karnataka began Friday with plenty of hope at having reduced Gujarat to 348/9 at stumps overnight. But Manas (184, 245b, 28x4, 2x6) dashed all of it as he forged a sensational 147-run stand for the final wicket with Daivik Shah (13 not out) to single-handedly power the hosts to a commanding 451 all out in 117.4 overs. Manas' contribution in a potentially game-changing stand was 127.

The momentum was completely with Gujarat but Karnataka openers Dhruv Krishnan (82) and Aadesh D Urs (39) showed no nerves whatsoever as they got the visitors off to a solid start by forging a 125-run stand.

But moment Rudra N Patel (2/45) dismissed Dhruv, the floodgates opened for Gujarat. From 125/1, Karnataka slipped to 139/3 before taking stumps at 160/3 in 60 overs.

Brief scores: Gujarat (O/n: 348/9): 451 all out in 117.4 overs (Malay V Shah 78, Maulyarajsinh Chavda 41, Manas M Dave 184, Kavya P Patel 43; Vaibhav Sharma 2-55, Eesa Puthige 2-56, Dhyaan M Hiremath 2-98, Rathan BR 4-120) vs Karnataka: 160/3 in 60 overs (Dhruv Krishnan 82, Aadesh D Urs 39; Rudra P Patel 2-45).

Gattil brace powers Snipers

BENGALURU, DHNS: Abhil A Thanan Gattil scored a brace as Snipers FC trounced DYES FC 4-1 in the BDFA A Division League Championship at the Bangalore Football Stadium on Friday.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

Bharath Gowda got DYES off to a perfect start with a goal in the eighth minute. Just when DYES appeared towards taking a 1-0 lead at halftime, Gattil levelled the proceedings in the 41st minute. That goal gave the momentum Snipers needed and they came charging off the blocks in the second half.

Stevan Manoj put Snipers ahead on the hour mark before Gattil doubled the advantage six minutes later with his second goal. Abhishek Raj then sealed a big win with a goal in the 75th minute.

Results: Snipers FC: 4 (Abhil A Thanan Gattil 41st, 66th, Stevan Manoj 60th, Abhishek Raj 75th) bt DYES FC: 1 (Bharath Gowda 8th); Income Tax FC: 1 (Arun Pondey 32nd OG) drew with AGORC FC: 1 (Madhavan H 44th); RWF FC: 2 (Rajesh S 42nd, Jayavandan Sigamani 75th) bt FC Deccan: 0.

Khawaja blasts 'racial' stereotyping ahead of swansong

SYDNEY, AP

Veteran Australia batter Usman Khawaja has announced he will retire from international cricket after the fifth Ashes Test beginning Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

He didn't go quietly.

The Pakistan-born Khawaja, who was the first Muslim to play for Australia, used his retirement announcement on Friday to criticise the "racial" stereotyping he experienced during his career.

It will be the 39-year-old Khawaja's 88th and final Test — played at the ground where he began his first-class career.

Khawaja scored his first Ashes century at the SCG with 171 against England in 2018.

It was also at that the SCG where he revived his career at age 35, scoring two centuries against England.

That prompted one of the greatest late-career revivals, as Khawaja hit seven centuries in his next two years back in the side.

But Khawaja's position had come under scrutiny and criticism this season after being unable to open in the first Ashes Test in Perth due to back spasms and then missing the Brisbane test with the injury.

He was then initially left out in Adelaide until Steve Smith's vertigo allowed Khawaja to return, before an 82 in the first innings there ensured he would stay in the side for the fourth Test in Melbourne.

Australia, with a 3-1 lead going into the fifth Test, has retained the Ashes.

Usman Khawaja said he will retire from international cricket after the fifth and final Ashes Test in Sydney, drawing the curtain on an illustrious 15-year career. AFP

Khawaja said he felt he was treated "a little bit different, even to now," because of his Pakistan and Muslim background.

"Different in the way I've been treated, different in how things have happened," he said at a media conference in Sydney.

"I had back spasms, it was something I couldn't control. The way the media and the past players came out and attacked me . . . I copped it for about five days straight. Everyone was piling in. Once the racial stereotypes came in, of me being lazy, it was things I've dealt with my whole life. Pakistani, West Indian, colored players...we're selfish, we only care about ourselves, we don't care about the team, we don't train hard enough."

Khawaja was criticized in the days leading up to the Perth match for golfing twice and not taking part in an optional training session.

Some commentators suggested the golf might have been responsible for his back issues.

"I can give you countless number of guys who have played golf the day before a match and have been injured, but you guys haven't said a thing," Khawaja told the assembled media. "I can give you even more examples of guys who have had 15 schooners (large glasses of beer) the night before a game and have then been injured, but no one said a word because they were just being Aussie larrikins, they were just being lads. But when I get injured, everyone went at my credibility and who I am as a person."

Khawaja said he knew the end of his career was imminent. "I guess moving into this series, I had an inkling this would be the last series," he said. "I'm glad I can go out on my own terms."

CRICKET TEAM SELECTION

NZ ODIs: Focus on struggling Pant

Will Siraj return as selectors look to rest pace ace Bumrah, all-rounder Hardik?

BENGALURU, DHNS

All eyes will be on the selection meeting this Saturday, when India's selectors sit down to finalise the 15-member ODI squad for the upcoming three-match series against New Zealand, which begins on January 11 in Vadodara. The choices they make, especially around Rishabh Pant and Mohammed Siraj, are expected to spark plenty of discussion.

It will be interesting to see if a struggling Rishabh Pant (left) retains his second wicketkeeper place while chances of Mohammed Siraj's return to ODI fold have increased with talks of resting Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya. AFP

At first glance, a major overhaul seems unlikely. The squad that comfortably beat South Africa not long ago has done little wrong, and continuity usually appeals to this selection panel. Still, there are a couple of areas where the Ajit Agarkar-led committee may feel compelled to take a closer look.

One of them is Pant's role as the second wicketkeeper. His place isn't as straightforward as it once was. Ishan Kishan has been in destructive form in the middle order for Jharkhand, while Dhruv Jurel recently announced himself with a massive "Daddy Hundred" for Uttar Pradesh in domestic cricket. Those performances inevitably raise questions.

Both Agarkar and head coach Gautam Gambhir have consistently stressed the importance of balance and role clarity. That philosophy has already shaped their choices in T20Is, where they've preferred wicketkeepers who can open the batting, such as Sanju Samson and Kishan. In ODIs, though, the requirement is different. The keeper is expected to bat in the middle order, typically at No. 5 or 6, and hold the innings together.

Pant hasn't had much opportunity to make that case recently. Since Gambhir took over as head coach, he has featured in just one ODI between July 2024 and December 2025. Overall, he has played only 31 ODIs in eight years, averaging under 35, numbers that hardly do justice to his ability or temperament. Even critics would admit that, at his best, Pant offers more match-changing impact than either Kishan or Jurel.

That said, his decision-making in the recent Guwahati Test loss to South Africa didn't impress the management. Still, dropping him without an extended run could raise uncomfortable questions about consistency in selection.

The fast-bowling combination is the other area likely to be debated. With an eye on the T20 World Cup, Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah are expected to be rested. That opens the door to rotation, but will the selectors also give a breather to Harshit Rana and Arshdeep Singh, both of whom featured against South Africa?

Siraj's situation is particularly intriguing. Left out of the Champions Trophy squad due to "conditions," he played in Australia before being overlooked for the South Africa series. He hasn't appeared in the first four rounds of the Vijay Hazare Trophy either, though he could turn out for Hyderabad later. Considering he was a regular in India's ODI setup until the 2023 World Cup, his recent absence is puzzling.

As for Mohammed Shami, he has been active for Bengal across formats, but some believe his best days at the international level may be behind him. Clear communication between him and the selectors has also been lacking.

Strong domestic performances from Sarfaraz Khan and Devdutt Padikkal have caught the eye, but opportunities are limited. With Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal locked in, Padikkal's chances look slim. Sarfaraz has been outstanding, yet Ruturaj Gaikwad's recent century against South Africa has put him ahead in the pecking order.

Rahul returns as Karnataka seek revenge

Defending champions take on tricky Tripura today

SIDNEY KIRAN
DH NEWS SERVICE

Unbeaten Karnataka will be eyeing revenge when they take on a dangerous Tripura in their fifth Group A encounter of the Vijay Hazare Trophy at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

Less than a month ago, Karnataka suffered a bruising defeat via Super Over in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy at the very same city. Despite coming into that encounter on the back of a poor run of results, Karnataka batters rose to the occasion in posting an imposing 197/6 in 20 overs.

And when they had Tripura reduced to 100/5 in the 11th over, they thought a win was almost there in the bag. But Manisankar Murasingh smashed a 35-ball 69 to turn the contest on its head and push it into a shootout where Sridam Paul's 4-ball 16 powered them to 22/0. Karnataka gave it all but eventually fell short by four runs, a defeat that highlighted their troubles in the shortest format yet again.

However, defending champions Karnataka, who were outstanding in the first phase of the Ranji Trophy, have come roaring back in the Vijay Hazare, winning four consecutive matches to sit second behind Madhya Pradesh with net run rate separating the two sides. Karnataka, after chasing down a 413-run target in the opening clash against SMAT champions Jharkhand, have looked in impressive touch, especially on the batting front.

KL Rahul

Opener Devdutt Padikkal has led the batting charts with three centuries to amass 406 runs in four games, averaging 101.50 at a good strike rate of 106. His partner at the top and skipper Mayank Agarwal too has made a sound start, totalling 245 runs, which includes a century and two fifties. The returning Karun Nair, serving as Agarwal's deputy, too has been in good touch with 238 runs.

In a welcome boost for Karnataka, India international KL Rahul will turn up for Karnataka and he is expected to keep wickets also. Rahul reached Ahmedabad on Friday morning and trained with the rest of his team-mates.

The only concern has been R Smaran's poor returns. A standout performer in the Ranji Trophy, he's been unable to replicate it in white-ball, managing just 88 runs in four innings in this tournament so far. He'll be looking to turn the tide on Saturday. Tripura, with two wins and an equal number of losses, will be hoping to shock Karnataka again.

Jain University team, winners of the South Zone Inter-University Basketball Championship at Christ in Bengaluru on Friday. STANDING (From left): Aahana, Anju, Lokesh (coach) Sankar UV (Director of Sports, Jain University), Puneeth Suresh (head coach), Ashmitha and Netra. SITTING: Aadhya Gowda, Dhara, Siya, Naomi, Susmitha, Khushi and Mona.

IN BRIEF

Jain Varsity, Christ qualify for Nationals

▸ Jain University emerged champions in the South Zone Inter-University Women's Basketball Championship at Christ in Bengaluru to qualify for the All-India Inter-University Women's Basketball Championship/ Khelo India which will take place later this January, reports DHNS.

First runners-up SRM University, Chennai, second runners-up Christ University, Bengaluru and and MG University, Kerala also made the cut for the nationals.

Result (final): Jain University: 87 (Naomi 20, Aadhya Gowda 17, Siya 15) bt SRM University, Chennai: 66 (Sangamitha 15, Jeevika 14) HT: 40-33.

Venus gets Aus Open wildcard

▸ Seven-time major singles champion Venus Williams was handed a wildcard to the Australian Open aged 45 on Friday, becoming the oldest woman ever to play at the season-opening Grand Slam, reports AFP from Melbourne.

The American, who has played only a limited number of singles matches in recent years, will compete in the main draw.

Neeraj, Sachin only two Indians in RTP

NEW DELHI, PTI: Javelin throwers Neeraj Chopra and Sachin Yadav are the only Indian athletes to figure in the Registered Testing Pool (RTP) of World Athletics' anti-doping watchdog Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) for the first quarter of this year.

While two-time Olympic medal-winning Chopra has been a regular on this list, Yadav is a new entrant after his fourth-place finish in the World Championships last year. The Asian Championship silver-medallist outperformed Chopra at the world event where the latter finished eighth due to nagging fitness issues that hampered his performance.

Yadav covered a personal best of 86.27m to not just end up higher than Chopra, but also reigning Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan, who also endured a bad day, ending 10th overall.

The 26-year-old from Uttar Pradesh, who is over six feet tall, is widely seen as the next big thing in Indian javelin throw landscape, dominated completely by Chopra for over half a decade now. The RTP is the highest tier pool of international or national level athletes who undergo no-advance notice testing.

Sunderland stall Manchester City charge

LONDON, AFP

Manchester City trail Arsenal by four points at the top of the Premier League after failing to end Sunderland's unbeaten home record in a 0-0 draw on Thursday, while Liverpool were also held by Leeds.

In a goal-shy start to 2026, three of the four New Year's Day fixtures ended without a goal as Tottenham also played out a 0-0 draw on Thomas Frank's return to Brentford.

City had won eight consecutive games to end 2025 and cut the gap on the Gunners to just two points.

But they were unable to respond to Arsenal's impressive 4-1 demolition of third-place Aston Villa on Tuesday despite creating a host of chances against a depleted Sunderland.

The Black Cats were without six players at the Africa Cup of Nations plus influential centre-back Dan Ballard due to injury.

Bernardo Silva had a City goal ruled out for offside just six minutes in.

Sunderland goalkeeper Robin Roefs was in inspired form to deny Erling Haaland and Josko Gvardiol, while Savinho blasted a glorious chance over. But City could not find the breakthrough as Sunderland preserved their record of not losing in 10 games at the Stadium of Light since returning to the top flight.

After eight successive wins last year, Pep Guardiola's Manchester City dropped points after being held goalless by Sunderland in a new year's match. REUTERS

"It's a mystery," said City boss Pep Guardiola on his side's inability to score. "We created a lot, especially in the second half. "We take the point, it's a long way (to go)."

Liverpool boss Arne Slot bemoaned his side's lack of "individual special moments" as the English champions struggled to break down a resilient Leeds in a goal-less draw at Anfield.

The Reds were toothless in attack without the absent Mohamed Salah and Alexander Isak and were only saved from defeat late on by a tight offside call.

Despite scoring in the last six games, Dominic Calvert-Lewin started on the bench as Daniel Farke had one eye on the visit of Manchester United to Elland Road on Saturday. Calvert-Lewin thought he had extended his scoring streak when he prodded in 10 minutes from time but had strayed just beyond the last defender. A draw extends Leeds' unbeaten run to six games and takes them seven points clear of the relegation zone.

Sai Sudharsan

Sudharsan fractures rib, could be out for six weeks

NEW DELHI, PTI: Young India batter Sai Sudharsan could be side-lined for more than a month after sustaining a rib fracture during a recent Vijay Hazare Trophy game against Madhya Pradesh, a BCCI source said on Friday.

Sudharsan, who isn't a part of India's white ball set-up, fractured the "anterior cortex of seventh right rib" while completing a diving run in Tamil Nadu's VHT game against Madhya Pradesh in Ahmedabad.

The 24-year-old is unlikely to be fit for Tamil Nadu's remaining Ranji Trophy games but a more realistic possibility remains that he will be available for Gujarat Titans in the IPL.

According to sources, Sudharsan reported to the Centre Of Excellence in Bengaluru on December 29 and a scan report mentioned "a slender, undisplaced fracture of the anterior cortex of the right seventh rib."

The area where he sustained the fracture was the same spot where he got hit during a net session earlier in the tournament.

Nortje included in SA's T20 World Cup squad

JOHANNESBURG, AFP: Injury-prone fast bowler Anrich Nortje was on Friday named in South Africa's 15-man squad for next month's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

The 32-year-old has had a long battle with injuries but returned to action when he played in two internationals against India last month.

He was South Africa's leading bowler in the 2024 World Cup, taking 15 wickets in nine matches.

Nortje, fellow paceman Kagiso Rabada and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj were included despite seldom playing for their country since the 2024 tournament.

Rabada has been used sparingly in the shortest format and played in only five of South Africa's 29 T20 internationals since they were beaten by India in the 2024 final in Barbados.

The squad: Aiden Markram (capt), Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock (wkt), Tony de Zorzi, Donovan Ferreira, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Kwena Maphaka, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Jason Smith.

India to tour Bangla in Sept

DHAKA, PTI: The Bangladesh Cricket Board on Friday announced it will host India for a three-match ODI as well as T20I series to be played in September this year. However it is not clear if the BCCI will agree to travel to Bangladesh in prevailing conditions with no stable government in place.

According to a media release by the BCB, the three ODIs will be played on September 1, 3 and 6, while the T20Is will be played on September 9, 12 and 13.

The Indian team will reach Bangladesh on August 28 for their limited-overs affair. In July last year, India's tour of Bangladesh was called off indefinitely and the six-match white-ball tour was deferred for more than one year.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) have mutually agreed to defer the white-ball series, three ODIs and three Twenty20 Internationals, between Bangladesh and India in August 2025 to September 2026," the BCCI had informed in a statement last July.

ISL: Footballers urge FIFA intervention

NEW DELHI, PTI: India's leading footballers, including Sunil Chhetri, along with several foreign players featuring in the Indian Super League (ISL), on Friday made a collective appeal to FIFA, urging the world governing body to intervene as the country's top-tier league remains suspended indefinitely.

With the 2025-26 ISL season yet to start, senior national team players such as Chhetri, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu and Sandhesh Jhingan voiced concern over the prolonged uncertainty, warning that Indian football is slipping into a state of "permanent paralysis".

"But more importantly, we are here to make a plea. Indian football governance is no longer able to fulfil its responsibilities. We are now staring at a permanent paralysis. This is the last-ditch effort to save what we can. So we are calling FIFA to step in and do what it takes to save Indian football," other players pitched in.

"We hope this message gets to the powers that are in Zurich. This call is not political, it is not driven by confrontation but by necessity."

Ranchi ease past Soorma

RANCHI, AGENCIES: Ranchi Royals defeated JSW Soorma Hockey Club 2-0 in their Women's Hero Hockey India League 2025-26 encounter at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Stadium in Ranchi on Friday.

Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (30th) and Sakshi Rana (54th) scored the two goals of the evening.

HOCKEY

Marijne returns to helm Indian women's team

HI reappoints Dutchman as the head coach of an embattled side

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Sjoerd Marijne had served as the head coach of the Indian women's hockey team between 2017-2021 when he led them to a fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics. HI MEDIA

Ever since Harendra Singh resigned as the head coach of the Indian women's hockey team nearly to a month ago, Sjoerd Marijne's name was doing the rounds as a replacement for the Indian.

The speculation was put to rest on Friday when Hockey India made an official announcement of reappointing the 51-year-old Dutchman as the chief coach of the national squad.

Marijne is a no stranger to the role. Regarded as the mastermind behind the Indian women squad's historic run at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, where they beat the mighty Australia 1-0 in the quarterfinal before a fourth-place finish, the former player had served the women's team from 2017 before calling it quits citing family reasons in 2021 immediately after the Tokyo Games.

Having earned respect for transforming a struggling side to one of the best units in world hockey during his previous stint, Marijne, once again, will take charge of a side going through a turmoil. Following below average results that led to them missing out on qualifying for the Paris Olympics in 2024 to the conflict between a few players and now-resigned Harendra, the 10th-ranked team in the world will need some serious tidying up.

For the significant task at hand, Marijne will be joined by Argentine Matias Vila as analytical coach and South African Wayne Lombard as scientific advisor and head of athletic performance. Lombard will be supported by Rodet Yila and Ciara Yila -- both in the role of scientific advisors.

"It's great to be back," Marijne said through an HI press release. "After 4.5 years, I return with fresh energy and a clear vision to support the team's growth and help the players achieve their full potential on the world stage."

Still without a direct qualification for the World Cup scheduled in August, to be co-hosted by Belgium and Netherlands, Marijne will hope to turn the fortunes around in his first assignment back as the head coach at the FIH Hockey Women's World Cup Qualifiers in Hyderabad from March 8 to 14. The Asian Games, with a Los Angeles Olympics qualification on offer for the gold medallists, is the other big event later this year.

Marijne is set to arrive in India on January 14 while the national camp will begin on January 19 at the Sports Authority of India here in Bengaluru.

New KBA chief Bangarappa looks to resolve tussle with BAI

BENGALURU, DHNS

In the last two decades, badminton has become one of the most popular sports in the country. Aware of its ever evolving and expanding nature, the newly-elected team of administrators of the Karnataka Badminton Association vouched to commence work immediately to take the game to newer heights in Karnataka.

Leading the team is Kumar S Bangarappa who was elected the 15th president of the KBA. And the 62-year-old politician, actor and an avid badminton admirer, expressed his willingness to live up to the promises made in the next four years.

"First and foremost (job) is to spread badminton to the nook and corner of Karnataka," said Bangarappa during a press conference on Friday.

Kumar S Bangarappa

"We want to ensure each of the 31 districts have an association and we will work together to scout future talents from everywhere. We also want to develop infrastructure. By infra I don't just mean halls and courts, but also improved kitting and hostel facilities. There are so many people who work behind the scenes for the sport. We want to improve their salaries, approach the government for housing schemes."

Currently, out of the 31 districts in Karnataka, there are 20 working district associations. However, as many as 9-10 districts are without a governing body of their own, non-functional or independent of KBA.

Another issue on the agenda of the committee is KBA's long standing tussle with the Badminton Association of India. Charging KBA of failing to comply with the National Sports Code, BAI had disaffiliated the State body in 2022 before the Karnataka High Court stayed the parent body's decision.

Speaking about the legal battle, Bangarappa promised to resolve the issue amicably in the coming months. "I will meet the president of BAI soon to talk about this issue. Obviously, we want to sort it out amicably and put KBA back within the BAI fold," he asserted.

Bengaluru alone it is estimated to have around 7000 courts with several others unaccounted for across the State. Training more coaches and umpires along with reviving the Karnataka Badminton League are some of the other important agendas for the team of 19 office-bearers and executive council members who for the first time have as many as five former badminton players including Olympian Anup Sridhar and former international Arvind Bhat.

Mandaviya tells SAI to tackle doping aggressively

NEW DELHI, PTI: In what promises to be a crucial and busy year for India's athletes, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya **(in pic)** has asked top SAI officials to set "delivery targets", come up with ideas to improve the country's sporting ecosystem, and address the menace of doping on a war footing.

With the Commonwealth and Asian Games headlining a year that has its fair share of world and continental championships as well, 2026 would set the ball rolling for Olympic qualification process in shooting and hockey.

Mandaviya held the meeting with top officials of SAI (Sports Authority of India) and Ministry on Thursday to chart out the annual plan.

His focus was on starting the work on his ambitious plan of having dedicated Olympic Centres for every sport across the country, besides ensuring the start of national leagues in at least five new sports.

"He stressed on setting priorities for the year and asked officers to have delivery targets. He plans to have meeting with Deputy Director level officers every 15 days and take ideas from them to improve the sports ecosystem," a ministry source said.

"Starting national leagues in five new sports this year is also a major target," he added.

India, which would be hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad and also bidding to bring the 2036 Olympics to the same city, is a country with a poor record in doping.

Karnataka shooter Tilottama bags gold

BHOPAL, PTI

Karnataka's Tilottama Sen carried her strong qualification form into the final to claim gold in the 10m air rifle junior women final with an impressive 253.1 while Haryana's Ameerah Arshad delivered a composed performance under pressure to clinch the 10m Air Rifle women's title at the 68th National Shooting Championship (Rifle) here on Friday.

Tilottama Sen with her women's junior air rifle gold. X

Ameerah edged past Railways' Rajshree Anilkumar Sancheti by a razor-thin margin of 0.1 point.

In the team events of 10m air rifle, Karnataka claimed the youth women's team gold with 1887.1 while Haryana (1885.9) and Madhya Pradesh (1881.7) completed the podium.

Haryana dominated the women's competition, winning gold with an aggregate score of 1892.7, ahead of Railways (1886.0) and Madhya Pradesh (1884.3).

Haryana also topped the junior women's team standings with the same aggregate, followed by Karnataka (1887.1) and Gujarat (1876.9).

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Show Buzz | Parvin Dabas

'Living life to the fullest makes me tick...'

Actor and filmmaker Parvin Dabas made his mark with Mira Nair's Monsoon Wedding, and has been known for his powerful roles in Khosla Ka Ghosla and Sahi Dhandhe Galat Bande. He has evolved over the years as a leading sports entrepreneur and wellness advocate.

Shilpi Madan caught up with him for this chat.

How has the journey been in the world of glamour?
The journey has been both exciting and interesting. Through all of it what has been constant has been my deep love for the art of acting. I have been privileged to work with some of the best actors and directors and in some cult films.

A movie that was the gamechanger for you...
One of my first films - Monsoon Wedding - which became not just an Indian but an international hit as well. It gave me recognition both in India and abroad and also allowed me to pursue my craft along with legends like Naseeruddin Shah. Playing the lead in this film which went on to win the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival and laurels at the Toronto Film Festival was instrumental in changing the perception of people abroad on Indian cinema.

You're a man of many passions - scuba diving, underwater photography, acting and now sports.

What makes you tick?
Living life to the fullest makes me tick. I truly believe that one must live to the fullest since there's only one life. I have also cycled from Manali to Leh, which is why am giving my all now to sports and its elevation also.

What is the best part about owning Panja League?
There is no best part yet... it is all hard work and challenges. It only looks good in photos and demands grit and grind all the time. But at the end of every season and every event, there is a lot of satisfaction one gets from having achieved excellence and bringing international standards to one's work.

You will never become a world or even a national champion if you focus only on the problems

Scores of Indians have clinched medals at international games. Yet, the facilities for sportspersons in the country remain dismal. How are you using your celeb wattage to draw attention to this for redressal?
I think one should only worry about the things in one's control. We have some challenges in infrastructure and beyond, and the attitude towards sports of many people in the sports system, but you will never become a world or even a national champion if you focus on the problems. The national and world champions brush these off and look beyond them to achieve excellence. It's like a film being shot in sub-zero temperature. You play with the hand you're dealt.

Cricket is a religion in the country. Are other sports changing this?
Other sports cannot change the fact that cricket is a religion in our country. They can just add to the sporting ecosystem by attempting to be excellent and entertaining themselves. They need to make people see their sport without reference to cricket at all. Not a simple task, full of challenges, but possible.

What's your fitness routine?
Eat well, work-out and try not to get injured. I do more functional fitness exercises combined with weights rather than just a hardcore weight routine.

If you could, you would...
Make people sensible.

What has been your biggest learning?
Never get over-excited by success or over-disappointed by perceived failure.

SIP AWAY THOSE INCHES

Shilpi Madan explains how a healthy first ingestion helps over time

Seeding In

Have you been rather indulgent, pouring in the elixirs during the party season? The New Year is here. Get ready to shrug off the unwanted kilos and bloating in 2026 by embracing the first-ingestion during the winter. Drink up the goodness of methi seeds and ajwain seeds soaked overnight, roasted or mixed in with warm water.

First cut

Ajwain water when consumed lukewarm on an empty stomach in the morning works beautifully during the winter. The warm nature of ajwain seeds together with the lukewarm water makes the absorption of the thermogenic qualities of the seeds easy and quick. This gives a power punch to your metabolism as your day starts and gifts you higher energy levels.
Additionally, the nutritious sip keeps sniffles and sneezes at bay. Soak a teaspoon of ajwain seeds in water in a copper glass overnight for best benefits in activating super digestion and bowel movements.

Goodness of methi

Pop in a few methi seeds with warm water as your first ingestion. Methi seeds work beautifully in glycaemic control and yield tremendous benefit for those with diabetes. It is known to ease off the inches and burn fat, especially if you are experiencing hormonal upheavals in the workings of the thyroid gland.
You can soak the seeds in a glass overnight. A copper vessel is preferred as copper is known to be an active antioxidant. It promotes the production of collagen and helps in keeping the wrinkles away.
Keep in mind you need to practise this consumption for a couple of months to be able to experience tangible results as personal biology differs from person to person.

SOME TIPS

- Jeera, fennel and chia seeds have a cooling effect. Roast and grind, and combine with ajwain seeds, to balance impact.
- Consume in moderation every day.
- Avoid pouring warm water into a copper vessel for consumption due to the reactive nature of the vessel.
- A sugary drink first thing in the morning is never a good idea.

Set the tone for 2026

Shilpi Madan explains how you can get a vision board to steer you to your goals this year

Now that you have raised a toast to the New Year, make time to prep up for active developments on your work front. All it takes is a little bit of dynamism to get your vision board ready. Make space for travel, relationships, me-time and growth in your career and hobbies.

Here are cues to get you started:

Stay positive

Nothing succeeds like optimism, self-drive and belief. Make use of positive language as you put down your wish-list and how you intend going about achieving it, for 2026.

Pause to recalibrate

Configure what you wish to achieve in the next 365 days. Enlist the short-term and long-term goals and put in a few visuals that reflect your feelings and desires.

Be precise

It always helps to be specific. Make a key mention of numbers - it could range from the monthly revenue that you target to the number of hours you allocate to exercise in a week.

Strike a balance

Family and career need to come in alignment for personal happiness. Mark out time and goals you wish to achieve in both areas. Cheerful visuals, moments of togetherness, a family vacation bucket-list need to figure in your vision board for the New Year.

Revisit and reset

Keep making revisions in your vision board as the year progresses. Either put a snapshot on your phone, make it a screen-saver or prepare a physical cut-out to tag onto your softboard at the study table. Make it stay top of mind.

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DH DECCAN HERALD
Wknd.

WINTER WELLNESS

Make citrus fruits and leafy greens a part of your diet daily through the winter months

WINTER WISE

WEEKEND LIFESTYLE FEATURE

SPICE IT UP

This is the season for spices that are both warming and immunity boosters. Infuse your winter sips with clove, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and nutmeg. From your morning herbal tea to a cup of hot chocolate before bed, most winter beverages can be infused with spices. These spices also help you avoid sugar.

SPICES FOR WINTER

Spices have medicinal properties. You need to make them a part of your daily diet in winter. They help keep you warm, boost your immunity, strengthen digestion and clear nasal congestion that is common in the cold days. They help fight off winter-related sniffles and infections. However, go with your tolerance level as too much of spices can irritate your stomach.

Magic of WINTER in a CUP

Deepa Natarajan Lobo puts together five comfort drinks you will enjoy this season

Winter drinks are quietly reassuring. They ask you to slow down and sip instead of rushing, to pause instead of scrolling. A chocolate-laced mug after dusk, a citrusy mocha that lifts the mood, a hint of spice that warms from within or a cool coconutty affair that refreshes you at the end of a long day - each cup feels personal and intimate.

In kitchens and cafes, chefs and beverage experts are transforming simple ingredients into innovative, and comforting drinks for the season.

Here are a few easy recipes to make your winters all the more magical and festive.

Dark Chocolate Orange Mocha

By PAVAN HANBAL
COFFEE EXPERT

What you need:
- Espresso – 30 ml
- Milk – 180 ml
- Dark chocolate, chopped – 25 gm
- Orange marmalade and a pinch of zest (or house orange pulp) – two teaspoons
- Sugar or jaggery syrup – one teaspoon, to taste
- Sea salt – a pinch
- Whipped cream, candied orange peel, grated chocolate (optional)

Preparation:
Warm the milk till hot but not boiling. In a mug, melt chocolate with a splash of hot milk. Stir in marmalade, zest, sugar and salt. Pour in the espresso and whisk smooth. Top with the remaining hot milk.

Finish with cream and candied orange.

COURTESY: COFFEE MECHANICS

Winter Wonderland

What you need:
- Berry syrup – 15 ml
- Coconut milk/coconut ice cream – Four scoops
- Cream soda – 100 ml
- Rosemary – For garnish

Preparation:
Scoop coconut ice cream into a glass to form the base. Drizzle the berry syrup over the ice cream for a fruity burst. Top with cream soda for a sparkling finish. Garnish with rosemary before serving.

COURTESY: MONIN INDIA

Wintermint Latte

What you need:
- Green mint syrup – 15 ml
- Chocolate sauce – 15 ml
- Creamy vanilla frappe – One scoop
- Espresso shot - One
- Milk – 180 ml
- A pinch each of cinnamon and nutmeg powders
- Candy cane – For garnish

Preparation:
Extract a single espresso shot and mix it with cinnamon and nutmeg powder. In a blender, add green mint syrup, milk, chocolate sauce, creamy vanilla frappe and ice cubes. Blend until smooth. Pour the blended mixture into a glass and pour the espresso mixture with cinnamon and nutmeg on top. Garnish with a candy cane for a festive finish.

COURTESY: MONIN INDIA

Honey and Lemon

By SOUGATA HALDER
EXECUTIVE CHEF

What you need:
- Honey – One tablespoon
- Fresh lemon juice – 15 ml
- One cinnamon stick
- Cloves – 2–3
- Hot water – 120–150 ml
- Lemon slice – For garnish

Preparation:
Warm the mug by filling it with hot water and discarding it. Pour honey and lemon juice into the warmed mug.

Pour in the hot water and stir gently until the honey dissolves. Add the cinnamon stick and cloves to infuse the drink with spice.

Garnish with a lemon slice, cinnamon stick and let the flavours steep for 2–3 minutes before sipping.

COURTESY: YAYAVAR, HYATT CENTRIC BALLYGUNGE KOLKATA

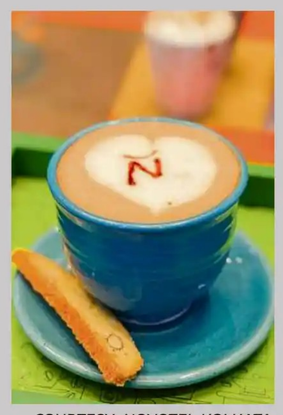
Hot Chocolate

By VIKRAM JAISWAL
EXECUTIVE CHEF

What you need:
- Hot chocolate mix – 50 gm
- Milk – 200 ml
- Chocolate powder – For garnish

Preparation:
Fill a mug with hot water and let it sit for a few seconds. Discard the water to ensure the mug stays warm. In a saucepan or using a steamer, heat the milk until it is steaming hot but not boiling. Pour the hot chocolate mix into the warmed mug. Slowly pour the hot milk over the hot chocolate mix while stirring continuously. Keep stirring until the mixture is smooth, creamy and fully dissolved.

Finish with a sprinkle of chocolate powder or simple art on top. Serve immediately while hot.



COURTESY: NOVOTEL KOLKATA HOTEL & RESIDENCES

Beetle Bailey

HOW DO I LOOK? I'M GIVING MY SPEECH TODAY
STAND UP STRAIGHT, HOLD YOUR HEAD UP, SHOULDERS BACK AND MAKE EYE CONTACT
YOU'VE GOT MORE INSTRUCTIONS THAN MY GOLF PRO
5/10
GREG+MORT WALKER
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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GIDTI

YEFOR

NANLAU

THRETO

We haven't walked by this marina in a while. What gives?
I just thought we might want to spend more time here. Oh, look! This one's for sale.
FOR SALE
10/26
TO SEE IF HIS WIFE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN BUYING A BOAT, HE NEEDED TO ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

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Answers

DIGIT FOYER ANNUAL HOTTER

To see if his wife would be interested in buying a boat, he needed to — FLOAT THE IDEA

HITORI-128

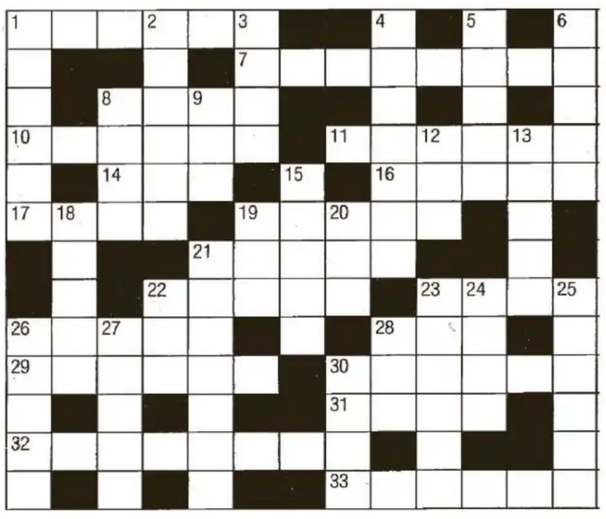
1	5	7	6	8	5	4	5
8	5	1	1	4	6	3	3
7	4	3	1	5	1	6	4
5	3	8	5	6	4	1	2
5	1	6	7	2	5	2	4
3	7	6	4	1	8	5	6
6	1	5	3	7	1	8	5
2	4	5	8	1	1	3	7

SOLUTION for HITORI-128

7	3	1	■	8	■	4	2
■	8	■	7	3	5	■	6
6	■	8	5	1	4	■	3
■	2	5	■	7	6	1	■
2	1	4	6	■	3	8	5
4	6	■	5	1	3	■	7
3	■	6	4	■	1	5	8
5	4	■	8	6	7	■	1

To solve the puzzle:
Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 129



EASY

ACROSS
1 Debris (6)
7 Exciting film (8)
8 Body powder (4)
10 Social outcast (6)
11 Limping gait (6)
14 Snake (3)
16 Herb (5)
17 Eyelid inflammation (4)
19 Aspect (5)
21 Raid, inroad (5)
22 Wading bird (5)
23 Satisfy fully (4)
26 Following in time (5)
28 Corpulent (3)
29 Deprive of food (6)
30 Deeply religious (6)
31 Dutch cheese (4)
32 Imperil (8)
33 Looked at (6)

DOWN
1 Commotion (6)
2 Cook slowly (6)
3 Engrave (4)
4 Disregard orders (7)
5 Card suit (5)
6 Thin porridge (5)
8 Salver (4)
9 Circuit (3)
12 Flying mammal (3)
13 Not heavy (5)
15 Nobleman (5)
18 Stealing (5)
19 In favour of (3)
20 Container (3)
21 Ardent (7)
22 That woman (3)
23 Vicious (6)
24 Minute particle (4)
25 Draw out (6)
26. Pallid (5)
27 Late (5)
28 Gave food to (3)
30 Diesel oil (4)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS
1 Uncle, my boy, is a strong man (6)
7 It's even handed to a mathematician (8)
8 Takes a little drink (4)
10 The cost of cigarettes? (6)
11 Reach the new status of a titan (6)
14 For the poet, it's not all over (3)
16 Where the French shelter their sick? (5)
17 Rodents' star turn (4)
19 Figure out a good symbol (5)
21 So the French are not heels (5)
22 Crazy about halftone reproduction? (5)
23 Be carried back in the same direction (4)
26 City of strange moods (5)
28 She's in the right! (3)
29 Cut back a tree that's fruited? (6)
30 A six-footer's out to hold Sid close by (6)
31 The burden on the States (4)
32 Lately needing to depend on having little money (8)
33 Ridicule can get one in tears, possibly (6)

DOWN
1 Something to eat before breakfast (6)
2 Pointed weapon held by Hitler's bodyguard, etc. (6)
3 Mistakenly sent home (4)
4 Struggles to digest tablets (7)
5 The latest thing in ties (5)
6 Annie's wrong to be so silly (5)
8 Person in Anne Hathaway's cottage (4)
9 By making a hamper vegetarian! (3)
12 Smaller than a tiny metal box (3)
13 Long ago it was written up in the dailies (5)
15 River diverted a lot of the capital of Venezuela (5)
18 Performer with nothing to cart around, perhaps (5)
19 Drink, little one (3)
20 Don's left the ass a note! (3)
21 Nobody will deny this vague individual (7)
22 Will he pass the Nag's Head? (3)
23 The final effect is an exceptional lustre (6)
24 She's almost Hibernian (4)
25 Come out as a bit of a schemer, generally (6)
26 It's fun, cobber (5)
27 Though not much good, he has been capped (5)
28 The young are in her clutches (3)
30 Bossy, heartless, wild fellows (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 129

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 1, Sam-son 7, Equation 8, sips 10, (a) Packet 11, Attain 14, O'er 16, L-ill-e 17, Rats 19, T-OK-en 21, So-les 22, Dotty 23, Ride (rev.) 26, Sodom 28, Her 29, Pruned 30, Be-Sid-e 31, On-U.S. 32, Re-cent-ly 33, Sat-i-re.
DOWN: 1, Supper 2, S-pike-S 3, Nest 4, Battles 5, Final 6, Inane 8, Scot 9, Per 12, Tin 13, Illed (rev.) 15, V-olta 18, Act-O-r 19, Tot 20, Key 21, Someone 22, Do-N 23, Result 24, Iris(-h) 25, Emerge 26, Sport 27, Dunce 28, Hen 30, Boys.

EASY
ACROSS: 1 Rubble, 7 Thriller, 8 Talc, 10 Pariah, 11 Hobble, 14 Asp, 16 Basil, 17 Style, 19 Facet, 21 Foray, 22 Heron, 23 Sate, 26 After, 28 Fat, 29 Starve, 30 Devout, 31 Edam, 32 Endanger, 33 Viewed.
DOWN: 1 Rumpus, 2 Braise, 3 Etch, 4 Disobey, 5 Clubs, 6 Gruel, 8 Tray, 9 Lap, 12 Bat, 13 Light, 15 Baron, 18 Theft, 19 For, 20 Can, 21 Fervent, 22 Her, 23 Savage, 24 Atom, 25 Extend, 26 Ashen, 27 Tardy, 28 Fed, 30 Dery.

DH DECCAN HERALD
Wknd. VARIETY

Remember the famous quote, 'this too shall pass'.

STRESS FREE

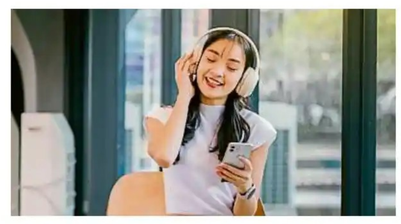
WEEKEND LIFESTYLE FEATURE

AVOID COMFORT FOOD

Many head for the snack bar when stressed out. Binging on comfort food is no way to beat stress. While you may get some temporary relief from the tasty snack you indulge in, the calories you pile on makes it a poor bargain. Comfort food is ok as a reward for an achievement or as a treat to celebrate a personal milestone, not as a stress-buster.

TUNE IN

Music is always a great stress-buster. Keep your favourite playlists ready. Plug in and spend a few minutes on music that calms you. Choose slow music or songs that convey joy. Slow instrumental music is a soother when you are stressed out. Listen to whatever pleases you, concentrating only on the music.



Stress Busters

Stress-free 2026

As we step into the New Year, the targets and plans made in the one gone by come along. You have the financial year end looming ahead and targets to achieve. The stress of a hectic life and push for greater heights remain. And, as the celebrations mute and it's back to the grind, the pressure returns too. Here are some easy ways to manage stress.

Breathe slow

This gives you instant relief. If you feel overwhelmed just sit back, relax and take a few slow, deep breaths. Remember to breathe only through your nose, keeping your mouth closed. Take your mind off work and just concentrate on your breathing. In a few minutes, you will get some respite. You will get back then with clearer focus.

STRETCH OUT

You can do this at your workstation. Just stand up and stretch your arms upwards. Then stretch your neck – pushing your ears towards your shoulders. Twist your spine and rotate your shoulders. These stretches will ease your taut muscles and help relieve stress. Do these before and after a stressful meeting.

TAKE A WALK

Walking is known to be a complete exercise. Go for a short walk, preferably outdoors. The winter is a good time for the outdoors. Take your mind off all stress points and just breathe easy. Take in the sights and sounds outside. The walk and pause in thought will ease the stress you are caught in.

Pen your thoughts

Writing down what's stressing you helps look at it from another perspective. Jot down the points you need to tackle and think them through. It helps you clear your mind, sift through all your thoughts and pick only the relevant ones, and attend to the matters on hand in a more effective way.

Fashion resolutions for 2026

Prasad Bidapa makes nine resolutions for the New Year that prioritise heritage and sustainability

MODEL: **SONY KAUR**
DESIGNER: **EKA BY RINA SINGH**
PHOTOGRAPHER: **JITEN AGARWAL**

PIC COURTESY: **RAJASTHAN HERITAGE WEEK**
DESIGNER: **ABRAHAM & THAKORE**
PHOTOGRAPHER: **HAIDER KHAN**

Fashion Notes

Every New Year comes with the usual promises - health, mindfulness, fewer emails and more sleep. But this year, let your resolutions begin in the wardrobe. Because what you wear is not frivolous - it is cultural memory, economic choice and personal preference stitched together. In an era of instant fashion and accelerated consumption, Indian heritage textiles remind us that time, skill and human touch are the ultimate luxuries. From hand-spun khadi to complex ikats, from jamdani to brocades, our crafts are not relics - they are living, breathing systems that deserve relevance and regular wear.

Some fashion resolutions I have made for 2026:

Resolution 1
I resolved to buy fewer clothes, but richer narratives. If it does not come with a story of hands, heritage or hours invested, it probably does not belong in my wardrobe.

Resolution 2
Defined luxury. True luxury lies in restraint, intelligence and fabric integrity.

Resolution 3
I resolved to wear Indian textiles without waiting for an occasion. A saree can be powerful, personal and modern - no wedding invite required.

Resolution 4
Support designers who honour process, not pace. Sustainability and beauty can coexist without compromise.

Resolution 5
I resolved to celebrate quiet fashion. Subtlety can be powerful too.

Resolution 6
Repeat outfits proudly. Handwoven garments age with grace and repetition is a mark of confidence, not carelessness.

Resolution 7
I resolved to invest in textiles, not trends. Trends expire quickly. A great weave only deepens with time.

Resolution 8
Ask 'who made this?' before 'how much is it?' Sustainability is not a marketing slogan - it is an ethical choice that supports livelihoods.

Resolution 9
I resolved to dress with intention. Because what one chooses to wear reflects what one chooses to value.

In summary, choose originals over copies, craft over convenience and home-grown brilliance over borrowed aesthetics. Slow fashion is not about nostalgia - it is about dignity and responsibility. And if luxury is defined by rarity, meaning and soul, then nothing wears more luxurious than Indian hand-made textiles.

PIC COURTESY: **VASTRA VEDA - NATIONAL HANDLOOM DAY 2025**
DESIGNER: **ABRAHAM & THAKORE**
PHOTOGRAPHER: **JITEN AGARWAL**

Winter skincare: Nourish, don't punish

Swatee Jog has some tips to help you keep your skin healthy and locks lustrous through the winter

Winter Wise

Bengaluru is known for its nip in the air, especially mornings and evenings. While you enjoy the cold weather, your skin and hair suffer silently. Lower temperatures, dry winds, reduced humidity and frequent hot showers strip away natural oils, leaving the skin dry, itchy, and hair dull and brittle.

With a little mindful care, some wise purchases and more home remedies, winter damage can be easily prevented.

Switch to gentle cleansers

Harsh soaps and face washes remove essential oils. Use mild, non-foaming cleansers that clean without over-drying. Avoid washing your face too frequently or wash with only lukewarm water. Using a paste of besan or rice flour mixed with turmeric powder for a bath helps the skin a lot.

Moisturise generously

Apply moisturiser within 2–3 minutes after bathing, when the skin is still slightly damp. Remember these points:

- Cream-based moisturisers for dry skin
- Oil-based or ceramide-rich lotions for very dry skin
- Light gel-cream for combination skin
- Don't forget, your elbows, knees, heels, feet and hands need separate generous dabs too. Also, repeat application in the day.

Reduce hot eater exposure

Long, hot showers feel comforting but are damaging. Use lukewarm water and keep bath time short. Never soak in a tub filled with hot water even though it may feel comforting in the cold season.

Protect lips and hands

Lips and hands have thinner skin and dry faster. Use a thick lip balm and hand cream regularly, especially before stepping outdoors and reapply every now and then or when you feel they're dry.

Sunscreen is still essential

Though the sun doesn't feel harsh, winter sun can still cause skin damage. Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen daily, especially if you spend time outdoors. Use sunglasses when outside.

Hydrate from within

Drink adequate water even if you don't feel thirsty. Include seasonal fruits, nuts, seeds and healthy fats to nourish skin from inside.

Winter care is all about being gentle with your skin, hair, lips. It's also about hydration, nutrition and protection.

With simple changes in daily habits, you can keep your skin glowing and your hair healthy through the cold months. Remember, winter may be harsh, but your self-care doesn't have to be.

Simple haircare for the cold days

Oil and don't over-wash

Grandma's advice of a warm oil massage once or twice a week improves blood circulation and prevents scalp dryness. Coconut oil, almond oil or sesame oil work well in winter.

Washing hair too often strips it of natural oils. Limit washing to once or twice a week and use a gentle, sulphate-free shampoo and conditioner.

Condition and check dandruff

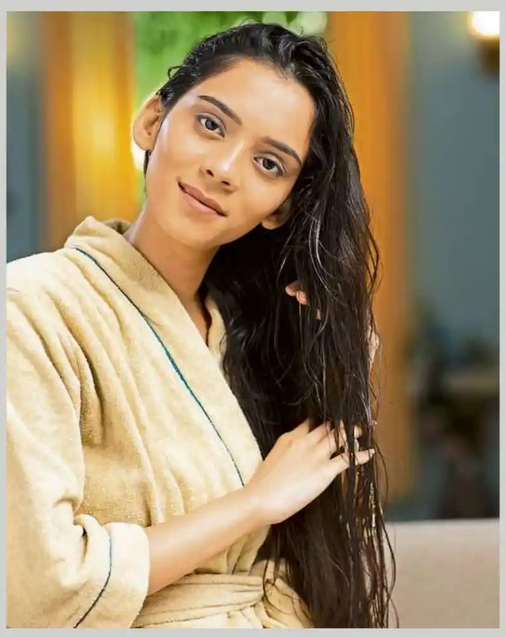
Conditioning is non-negotiable in winter. Focus on mid-lengths and ends to prevent dryness and breakage. Use hair packs occasionally to lock in the moisture.

Dry scalp can mimic dandruff. Avoid harsh anti-dandruff shampoos unless medically required. Moisturising oils and mild shampoos help.

Limit heat styling

Your hair will be dry and brittle in winter. Excessive blow-drying, straightening or curling worsens damage. Let hair air-dry whenever possible.

Cold winds strip moisture. Use silk or satin scarves or caps - but ensure they are clean and not too tight to avoid friction and hair fall. Avoid being in very close proximity to the air conditioner. Use a satin pillow cover to prevent hair turning dry as cotton ones tend to absorb moisture and oil.



DH DECCAN HERALD
Wknd. LEISURE

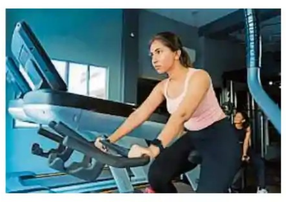
Work on your will power. Determination helps you on days when you are low on motivation

FIGHTING FIT

WEEKEND LIFESTYLE FEATURE

CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY

Stay at it through the year. Choose consistency over intensity. Daily light exercises are far better than an intense session intermittently. It becomes easier to be consistent with your gym sessions if you have friends there you look forward to meeting daily. Check member profile while joining a gym



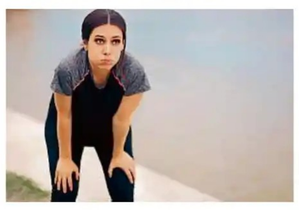
TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

A great way to stay motivated and consistent is noting the progress you make. Whether it's weight loss or flexibility, track the progress you make every month. Note down all your achievements including ones such as 'one month at the gym without a break'. Your progress also helps you evaluate the efficiency of your regimen.

Fit in 2026

Resolve it

Fitness is a resolution many make for the New Year. It is also one of the first resolutions to be broken. And, this in spite of the fact that fitness is easily one of the most important resolutions made. This year, why not resolve not to break this resolution? It's easier to keep it with these tips.



BEGIN EASY

If you have never worked-out in a gym, begin with a walk around a park daily. Set aside enough time to get started. Give yourself time to get used to a daily exercise routine. Go onto some floor exercises at home and once you have made it a part of your day, sign up at a gym close by.

LIST OUTCOMES

Make a list of your fitness goals. Prioritise them – weight loss, flexibility, strength etc. Take the help of a fitness expert and spread them across the year. As you begin nearing a goal, you will be inspired to push harder towards the others too. It helps you stay motivated and make fitness a resolution you keep.

Achievable goals

One of the reasons why resolutions are not kept is because of unrealistic goals that cannot be achieved – at least in a year. Set goals you can achieve in the near term. This is even more important if you are a beginner. Also, limit the number of goals based on how difficult they are to achieve and time they would take.

MAKE IT FUN

Exercising taken as a duty is never enjoyable. Make friends at the gym – it's a group you will enjoy being in as everyone has fitness in common. Go for a gym that also has group activities such as aerobics or cycling. If you enjoy your gym sessions, you will naturally head to them and your fitness resolution will yield results.

Glamping: A mix of adventure and luxury

The convenience of well-appointed interiors and experience of thewild outdoors make for a perfect holiday that does not compromise on comfort or adventure, says Swatee Jog

Travel Bug

The word itself maybe a portmanteau of 'glamorous' and 'camping', but it's also a paradox. While camping is best enjoyed in the most rugged form – in jungles, on cliffs and mountain tops, riversides and along lakes where no fixed infrastructure is available, glamping offers all the luxuries in the world inside that camping tent!

Many people are constantly rushing towards speed and screens. For them, travel today is no longer about ticking destinations off a list - it is about slowing down, reconnecting and experiencing Nature. At the same time, many want to enjoy without giving up comforts that they are so used to. This desire has given rise to 'glamping', a refined form of travel that blends the raw beauty of the outdoors with the luxuries of a well-designed stay, even in the most remote areas. It has been gaining tremendous momentum post the pandemic.

Glamping allows travellers to immerse themselves in Nature without the discomfort traditionally associated with camping. No pitching rudimentary tents, no sleeping bags on uneven ground, and no compromise on hygiene or convenience - only thoughtful comfort wrapped in wilderness.

How glamping is different

Glamping accommodations – in the form of luxury tents made of special fabric and materials, pods, huts or domes - are designed to enhance the experience of Nature without compromising on comfort and luxury. The only difference is that instead of concrete structures, you stay in luxury tents, eco-lodges, tree-houses, dome stays or riverside cottages, each carefully placed to preserve the surrounding ecosystem.

Common features include:

- Comfortable bed with quality linen
- Attached bathroom with modern amenities like hot water shower, bathtub
- Climate-friendly lighting and ventilation, even air conditioning in desert areas
- Private sit-out or deck overlooking a forest, river or hill
- Curated interiors that reflect local culture and aesthetics
- Wi-fi and phone connectivity, TV and music

Many glamping sites also focus on sustainability - using minimal construction, eco-friendly materials, and responsible waste management - making it a conscious choice for the discerning modern travellers.

Where glamping scores

Glamping offers the romance of the outdoors with the reassurance of comfort.

Adventure without compromise: If you want to wake up to birdsong, misty mornings and open skies - all the while enjoying a plush bed, clean bathroom, good food and restful sleep. Unlike crowded hotels, glamping sites usually offer limited units, ensuring exclusivity, silence and personal space.

Safe for all age groups: From young professionals and families to senior travellers, glamping removes the physical strain of traditional camping while retaining its charm. So, no bugs, no rugged terrain and no uncomfortable bed.

Best experiences: Glamping experiences often extend to guided Nature walks, river activities, stargazing, campfire evenings, local cuisine and cultural interactions - turning a stay into a story worth telling, especially on social media. It is also very suitable for weekend adventure escapes.

Future of travel

Glamping reflects a larger shift in how people travel today. It is about mindful luxury, where experiences matter more than excess, and comfort coexists with consciousness. As travellers increasingly seek authenticity, wellness and Nature-centric escapes, glamping is no longer a trend - it is a lifestyle choice.

In Karnataka, where Nature and culture exist in quiet harmony, glamping becomes more than a stay. It becomes a way to pause, breathe and rediscover the joy of being present.

Karnataka: A natural choice for glamping

Karnataka's diverse geography makes it one of India's most promising regions for glamping. From dense forests, beaches to misty hills and river landscapes, the state offers natural settings that are both dramatic and serene.

Western ghats with lush rainforests, wildlife corridors and hidden waterfalls create immersive glamping experiences for Nature lovers. Kodagu, Nagarahole, Talakadu and Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary are a few potential locations.

River belts and backwaters - riverside glamping near flowing water offers tranquillity, birdlife and scenic beauty. Dandeli, Sakleshpura, Shivanasamudra and Badami are a few such spots.

The cool climate, coffee estates and panoramic views of hill stations provide perfect backdrops for luxury tents and eco-stays. Kodagu, Hampi and Sirsi are a few examples.

Beachside glamping blends sea breeze, sunset and barefoot luxury. Add to that the local delicacies and the temples nearby. Gokarna, Udupi, Mangaluru, Honnavar and Murdeshwar are some favourite spots.

Beyond geography, Karnataka's rich cultural heritage - its cuisine, folk traditions, architecture and warmth - adds depth to the glamping experience, making stays not just scenic but soulful.

Into the blue in the cold!

Swimming is a great exercise in the winter for both body and mind. **Deepa Natarajan Lobo** elaborates

Winter Wise

In the winter months of the year when the temperatures dip, it can be quite challenging for even a regular swimmer to go for a swim. The chilly air, cold waters and fear of falling ill keep one away from the pool, trading the icy splashes of water for the warmth of home.

However, in tropical countries like India, where pool temperatures rarely drop to extreme lows, swimming through winter is less about enduring discomfort and more about adapting smartly. With the right warm-up, pacing and post-swim care, winter swimming can offer deeper physiological and psychological benefits than summer swims, without significantly increasing health risks.

Experts too believe that mindful winter swimming is one of the most effective ways to stay active, manage joint pains and protect mental health during colder months.

Why winter swimming works

"Winter swimming can do wonders for the health", says Palak Dengla, Chief Physiotherapist at a well-known hospital. "Winter swimming isn't escaping the cold – it's embracing it strategically. Your body, mind, and those nagging shoulder aches will thank you," she says and adds, "It's like stoking your body's internal furnace - the more you feed it, the stronger it burns."

According to Dr Flemingson Lazarus, a periodontist and endurance swimmer who has completed six Ironman events across six continents, swimming involves almost all muscles groups. "Water is around 750 times denser than air. Hence, the body biomechanics of a swim helps in development of strong skeletal and muscular systems with comparatively less strain on joints. It reduces chronic pain, activates fat thereby reducing inflammation, decompresses spine and boosts immunity, among many other things. This makes it the best work-out for any age group in any season, including winters."

As water temperatures drop, the body becomes a metabolic powerhouse, say both the experts. "Swimming burns 500-700 calories per hour in winters when compared to summer's 400-500. This thermogenic response accelerates circulation, delivering oxygen-rich blood to stiff joints and tired muscles," they note.

Boosting mental health

Winter swimming also plays a quiet but significant role in supporting mental health during colder months, when low energy, disrupted routines and reduced outdoor activity can affect the mood. Palak notes that cold-water exposure stimulates the release of endorphins, helping counter stress and seasonal low mood.

"Swimming releases endorphins which boost your mental health. Hence, regular exposure to cold water can improve focus, sleep quality and overall emotional balance," she says. Dr Flemingson agrees, adding that consistency matters as much as intensity. "Staying in the water through winter provides structure and routine, which are crucial for mental well-being. Many swimmers report feeling more energised and mentally resilient during colder months," he concludes.

Some tips if you are swimming in cold weather

- Never swim alone
- Avoid diving directly into cold water
- A sudden plunge can spike blood pressure dangerously. Start with 10-minute warm-up session (wearing wetsuit is optional). Give your body two to three weeks to acclimatise
- Rewarm gradually post-swim - no hot shower immediately
- To avoid respiratory infections, warm-up before a swim and sip on a warm beverage after it
- Wear warm clothing to prevent a post-swim chill
- Applying coconut oil on your skin before a swim helps in protecting it and preventing tanning
- While heated pools are a comfortable choice for beginners, non-heated pools are often preferred for endurance swim training, as they help the body adapt better

Make 2026 a year of letting go

'Drop the baggage and make a new beginning with me at the centre' is the mantra of many for this year, writes Ikyatha Yerasala

Self Help

In 2026, many people aren't chasing more. They are leaving and letting go. From leaving toxic relationships that drain them to letting go of self-sabotaging habits, people are leaving behind unhealthy habits that no longer serve them and are detrimental to them. Letting go in order to start afresh is the mantra for 2026.

"I'm going to let go of being hard on myself. Since the time I took a long break from work, I have been taking other people's opinions of me too seriously. I'm trying to be the perfect mom, wife and friend. If anyone feels the slightest discomfort, I start being hard on myself and think I am not doing anything right. I often doubt myself and become unsure of my own abilities. I end up striving for perfection. But lately I have realised that once their needs are met, no one cares that much about me or my needs anymore", says homemaker Aboli Sarkar, who wants to focus on herself in 2026. "It's going to be about my needs, my growth and my self-worth. I'm not letting anyone's opinion of me affect my worth".

Negative feelings harboured for others can take a toll on your mental and physical health. For yoga instructor Sneha K, letting go of resentment is the key this year. "I've been going through a hard phase for two years now and I'm holding on to a lot of resentment towards the person who put me in this position. But I want to let go of it", she says.

2026 is also the year where people are letting go of habits that no longer serve their well-being. For scientist and educator Shreyas Ramoji, who's always been a people pleaser, leaving behind that trait is the key. "I used to say 'yes' a lot although I didn't really want to, because in my head, saying no would mean 'losing people' or being 'less likable'. I would end up feeling bad if I didn't even get bare minimum gratitude from them. But now, I have learnt to prioritise myself along with other people. I will only say yes if I want to say yes, not because I fear saying no", he says.

As 2026 unfolds, more people are discovering that happiness begins with letting go of self-destructive habits and leaving behind what no longer serves them.